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Important to issues of writing instruction are the ways in which teachers, specifically those who teach in the discipline of language arts and English, understand and see themselves as writers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how secondary English teachers positioned themselves and were positioned by others as writers through participation in a Writing Collaborative designed to provide authentic opportunities for engaging and examining themselves as writers. This study included seven secondary English teachers, three middle school and four high school, who all taught writing as required by their respective course curriculums. This semester-long research applied case study methods and utilized multiple data sources, including teacher interviews, video recordings of Writing Collaborative sessions, and teachers' written artifacts to inform the analysis. Data was analyzed using the constant-comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and drawing from discourse analysis (Gee, 2011, Mercer, 2000), focused closely on "episodes of talk" (Mercer, 2004, p.142). A social theory of learning, specifically Wenger's (1998) *Communities of Practice* framework, sociocultural theories and concepts of language and learning (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Mercer, 2000) and theories of identity (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain, 1998; Wenger, 1998) were used to analyze the ways in which teachers' identities as writers shaped and were shaped by the Writing Collaborative.

Findings included the ways in which the practices of the community, particularly the practice of sharing and teachers' responses to sharing, contributed to the shaping of

teachers' identities as writers and the shaping of the Writing Collaborative as a community of practice. These shared practices included: (a) interject humor, (b) praise and encourage, (c) support and affirm, (d) ask questions, (e) explore ideas, (e) share knowledge and beliefs, and (f) narrate personal stories. Consequently, these shared practices were foundational to the formation of the Writing Collaborative; more importantly, the practices facilitated the meanings teachers negotiated about writers and writing and the ways in which their identities as writers were shaped. The categories of meanings the teachers made encompassed: (a) definitions of writers (b) purposes of writing (c) writing ideas (d) writing as a process, and (e) personal aspects of writing. The case study of the Writing Collaborative provided insights into the ways in which teachers' writer identities were shaped and reshaped through participation in the community's practices and meaning-making about writers and writing. This was particularly true for teachers who did not self-identify as writers or who were skeptical to claim writer identities. This study revealed that regardless of how the teachers saw themselves as writers, all of them enacted multiple writer identities. Thus, the Writing Collaborative served as a space for teachers to reshape existing writer identities and explore possible writer identities for themselves. Implications of the study include ways to assist teachers in understanding the complexities of teaching writing by helping them understand themselves as writers.

A WRITING COLLABORATIVE: SHAPING SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHERS'
IDENTITIES AS WRITERS WITHIN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

by

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For my teachers who inspired me to become a teacher
For my colleagues who helped to shape me as an educator
For my students who taught me the value of being a teacher
For my parents who always believed in me
For my husband and children whose love and support
motivated me throughout this journey

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teachers should write so they understand the process of writing from within. They should know the territory intellectually and emotionally: how you have to think to write, how you feel when writing. Teachers of writing do not have to be great writers, but they should have frequent and recent experience in writing. (Murray, 2004, p.74)

Writing, like reading, is an important foundation of effective literacy skills.

While many teachers are making the transition to focused reading instruction, less are able to provide effective writing instruction. It is imperative that our students develop not only quality reading skills, but quality writing skills as well. “Today, writing is foundational for success” (Gallagher, 2006, p. 4).

Historically, reforms of literacy education have focused heavily on reading and reading instruction, evading issues related to writing, writing instruction, and writing achievement (Graham & Perin, 2007). However, since the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001 and ignited recently by the new Common Core State Standards (2010), schools across the United States have focused their efforts into providing effective literacy instruction and learning opportunities for all students, addressing both reading and writing as important cornerstones of literacy (Rief, 2003a). As a result, educators and policymakers have helped to define the literacy needs of 21st century American students (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000), changing, in particular, the expectations for writing and writing instruction (NWP & Nagin, 2003; the National

Commission on Writing, 2003). Educators and those engaged in educational research have come to understand that writing is an important feature of the literacy landscape, and many innovative programs, approaches, and teaching strategies have been identified and implemented in schools across the nation, periodically with positive results (Graham & Perin, 2007; NWP & Nagin, 2003). While these efforts are applauded, writing continues to challenge our adolescents as evidenced by minimal progress nationwide (Applebee & Langer, 2006; Graham & Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing, 2003).

As a former English Language Arts teacher, a current literacy specialist in a high school setting, and one who frequently leads professional development on literacy practices, including writing, I am keenly aware of the challenges facing teachers of writing. More importantly, as a former teacher of writing, I can relate to the complexities and issues related to effective writing instruction and support Murray (2004) and many other writers, practitioners, and researchers who understand the value of the teacher as a writer. In my own practice, being a teacher of writing also meant I was a writer myself. I wrote with my students, modeled the writing process, and shared my struggles and, oftentimes, messy compositions all in an effort to support and enhance my students' writing experiences. Working within the constraints of the classroom where students traditionally perceive writing as an assessment tool, I set out to create and nurture a community of writers who were confident in their ability to write for varied purposes. My approach to writing instruction was grounded in research and best practices, but more importantly, it evolved from my own experiences with writing as well as my beliefs

about what constituted quality writing instruction. I also led a writerly life outside the demands of the teaching profession, keeping a journal of important milestones and making honest attempts at poetry. Not only was I a teacher of writing, but also I identified myself as a writer. How else could I authentically teach my students to be effective writers if I did not engage in the process myself? However, many secondary English teachers do not view themselves as writers, having been drawn into teaching English for their love of and comfort level with reading, not writing (Cremin & Baker, 2010). These curiosities motivated me to understand how secondary English teachers might come to view themselves as writers and the considerations for instructional practices given the opportunity.

Teacher-as-Writer Debate

This idea of teachers as writers has been a center of debate, particularly in regards to effective writing instruction. Since the 1970s, the idea that teachers of writing should be writers has been ubiquitous (Whitney, 2009). However, as discussions and studies of writing as a process reached their height, researchers and educators argued whether teachers of writing should also be writers or write themselves. Igniting the debate in a 1990 article titled “Why High School Writing Teachers Should Not Write,” Karen Jost posited that high school English teachers should not write, citing constraints of time, extra-curricular involvement, and the lack of professional advantage to do so. She adamantly claimed that asking English teachers to be writers was simply unrealistic. She challenged writing experts and those in the ivory towers of academia (Murray, Moffett, and Knoblauch), many of whom are writers as well as teachers, to take up their cause in

the real life “trenches” of a high school English classroom. Her arguments met with mixed responses, causing a very public and heated debate from writing teachers across the country (Gillespie, 1991).

However, some in the field argue it is not simply a matter of whether teachers should or should not write. The argument is complex and riddled with variations of what it means to be a teacher writer, which itself has been contested in multiple ways across both research and professional literature on the topic (Dahl, 1992; Gillespie, 1991; Jost, 1990). These critics are not claiming that teachers who teach writing do not need to know something about the subject of writing just as very few, if any, would suggest that as a science teacher it is not necessary for one to have an understanding of science. Rather, the debate revolves around several issues, including teachers’ experiences with writing, their beliefs about writing instruction, teachers’ perceptions of writing and what it means to be a writer and the relationship to writing instructional practices (Frager, 1994; Robbins, 1992).

Some research suggests that although personal experience as a writer may enhance writing instruction, teachers who write themselves do not necessarily teach writing more effectively than their non-writer colleagues. In a study of seven secondary English teachers, Gleeson and Prain (1996) discovered that the value teachers placed on writing, as an activity for their students and students’ ability to succeed in writing was a more important instructional factor than whether the teachers themselves were writers. Likewise, Robbins (1996) found in a similar case study of twelve secondary English teachers that “the mere fact that teachers write does not tell much about the relationship

between their writing and their teaching” (p. 125). All of the teachers in the study were writers in some capacity, yet the use of their writing and writing experiences in their pedagogical approaches varied widely.

The debate is complicated further by the ways in which the term “teacher-as-writer” is defined and perceived by those in the field. For many writing teachers, being a writer implies being a published author (Jost, 1990; Robbins, 1992). Many of these teachers do not see writing in a journal and letter writing, for example, as “real” writing. This perspective certainly creates a double standard in the classroom where teachers of writing are to support and advocate students’ writing endeavors in a variety of genres but do not consider their own writing endeavors as authentic writing (Robbins, 1992).

Additionally, some teachers perceive the teacher-as-writer concept primarily as an instructional technique (Robbins, 1996). Although, teacher writers like Nancie Atwell (1998), Donald Graves (1983) and Regie Routman (2005) support the instructional use of teachers’ writing, many of the teachers in Robbins’ (1992) study felt the use of their writing as models for their students was risky, time-consuming, disconnected from student pursuits, and unnecessary in an age where many professional models existed. Among those who provide professional development for teachers in the area of writing see the teacher’s role as predominantly instructional. Rickards and Hawes (2004) suggested five roles of effective writing teachers: (a) models, (b) coaches, (c) assessors, (d) planners and (e) consultants. The role of modeling here, particularly, suggests contrived writing whereby the teacher composes, in a linear fashion, a piece of writing in front of students or provides writing from other professionals as models. “This robs

students of the opportunity to see real-life writing in process and diminishes the learning possibilities” (Routman, 2005, p. 47). On the other hand, teachers in a study conducted by Gleeson and Prain, (1996) felt that the modeling of writing by teachers served to narrow notions of good writing, particularly in those who held tight to their identities as writers. Students were better served in writing when teachers kept their writer selves at a distance. These efforts seem to solidify some teachers' claim that their role is to “read and to explain, not to write” (Robbins, 1996, p. 120).

Despite these controversies, the notion of the “teacher-as-writer” has received considerable advocacy and support in the professional literature on writing and writing practices although scant studies have been conducted in the field of educational research (Whitney, 2009).

Why Teachers of Writing Should Be Writers

Professional literature and many in education have long argued the value and importance of teachers writing within and beyond the classroom (Cremin & Baker, 2010). Sparked primarily by the writing process movement and the establishment of the National Writing Project, many writing scholars have concluded that confident, avid writers make for effective writing teachers (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1983; Frager, 1994; Graves, 1983; Routman, 1996).

One of the most obvious and compelling arguments for the teacher-as-writer notion is that by engaging in a "writerly" life, teachers will inform and improve their writing instructional practices. By engaging in the writing process, teachers are in a better position to use these experiences for instructional purposes, articulating for

students the trials and tribulations of the process (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). Routman (2005) suggested letting students watch you write – to observe you plan, write, think, revise, and edit, on the fly. As Augsburger (1998) reflected, "Teachers who write are in a better position to guide students, provide useful feedback, and show the real value of writing" (p. 548). Gillespie (1991) echoed these reasons for teacher writers stating that teachers should write to establish their own authority on issues of writing, to expand their repertoire of responses to students' trials and tribulations with writing, and to establish educational credibility and professionalism about writing. In other words, to practice what we teach.

Teachers turned authors like Ralph Fletcher and Peter Elbow and journalist and long-time teacher Donald Murray clearly define themselves as writers and strongly advocate for teachers to write. Murray (2004), a longtime advocate and great model of writing, brought several assumptions to his writing: writing is thinking, writing is a process, and there is no one way. For Murray, writing was about being a learner. In fact, he challenged the reader in this way: "if you accept this profession - this calling, this vocation—you have apprenticed yourself to a lifetime of learning" (p. 5). He asked the age-old question, "Why write?" He wrote to have his writing come alive and stressed that this should be the mission of every teacher of writing—to allow for their students' writing to come alive. Likewise, teacher writer Nancie Atwell (1998) used her own research in the classroom to examine how her experiences as a writer can enrich her writing instruction.

Right from the start I hope for rich, authentic, adult-like experiences for my students. I want them to use writing to know themselves and the world and to discover what writing is good for. They should experiment across four basic genres – fiction, memoir, poetry, and exposition –to learn the elements of each and explore what each can do for them. (p. 111)

Though professional literature clearly advocates the reasons why teachers should write, much of teachers' resistance to writing and incorporating writing into their lessons stems from their own negative perceptions of themselves as writers, as well as their uncertainty about teaching and effectively supporting writing in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers' identities as writers and their attitudes toward writing are affected by their lack of assurance and view of themselves as writers (Cremin & Baker, 2010). Given the focus on writing instruction in our country through organizations like the National Writing Project and with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (2010), teachers are expected to model and practice writing themselves; however, this becomes difficult if they lack confidence and do not enact positive writing identities (Cremin & Baker, 2010).

Teacher Learning Communities

Recent reform efforts in the area of professional development for writing have focused on teachers collaborating in learning communities (Blau, 1993; Brannon & Pradl, 1994; Lieberman & Wood, 2003; Pella, 2011; Whitney, 2008). With slight variations in their names and structures, these learning communities typically consist of teachers who meet regularly to explore and improve their instructional practice through conversation and interaction with others. Ideally, these communities become places for teachers “to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions needed to help students learn

and achieve at higher levels (Killion, 2012, p. ii). Wenger (1998) noted that learning occurs among individuals when they are actively engaged with one another, pursuing improvements in their practice. Therefore, it is very important to understand the ways in which teacher learning occurs and its implication for instructional practice.

Creating teacher groups for the purpose of increasing teacher effectiveness is a predominantly public education response to ineffective professional development for teachers. Many school districts and schools have answered this call for more relevant teacher development opportunities, organizing a variety of teacher groups around shared interests, focused pedagogy, curriculum, and student learning. A growing body of research acknowledges some of the advantages of teachers collaborating, working in groups (Avery & Carlsen, 2001). In the last decade, professional development efforts for teachers have focused on creating professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004), teachers' learning communities (Wood, 2007) or inquiry groups (Clark, 2001) to name a few models. Although other variations of these models exist by different names, the majority of these teacher groups have origins from within the education profession (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006). These learning communities are believed to depend heavily upon collaboration with colleagues in order to create the environment that nurtures professional learning. A review of the literature on professional learning communities by Stoll et al. noted that at the center of the concept is the notion of community. "The focus is not just on individual teachers' professional learning but on professional learning within a community context—a community of learners, and the notion of collective learning" (p. 225). Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001)

argued that the term “community,” however, has lost its meaning, having been attached to too many educational reform movements in too many ways.

Clark (2001), frustrated with historical means of teacher development, implored that “sustainable professional development for teachers must be led by teachers themselves and be intrinsically satisfying, voluntary, and inexpensive” (p. 4). Despite these efforts, the organization of “communities” within public education still tends to be mandated, unsustainable, disconnected from authentic experiences of teaching and learning, and lacking enterprise for the community. In a critical, but compelling, two and one half year study of the implementation of teachers’ learning communities in one school district, Wood (2007) determined that although the focus of the initiative was to build collective responsibility for student learning, many of the teachers saw little connection between participation in the community and student learning outcomes. Furthermore, efficacy among teachers continued to be constrained by accountability and high stakes testing, despite the district’s efforts to ensure teacher empowerment and autonomy. Finally, issues of tension between teachers and school leadership undermined the project’s “foundational idea that teachers working in professional learning communities who share expertise are more likely to improve student learning than teachers working alone” (p. 711).

These studies suggest that professional learning communities typically lack the key elements that comprise a community of practice: *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise*, and *a shared repertoire* as defined by Wenger (1998). “The enterprise is never fully determined by an outside mandate, by prescription, or by any individual

participant. Even when a community of practice arises in response to some outside mandate, the practice evolves into the community's own response to that mandate" (p. 80). As a result, many professional learning communities, as instituted in education today, have shown little promise for improving teacher practices and student learning, particularly in the area of writing (Lieberman & Wood, 2003).

I share this brief commentary on professional learning communities as a way to reject traditional forms of on-site, institutionalized teacher development efforts in support of my search for a more meaningful framework to examine the ways in which secondary English teachers explore writing and negotiate identities as writers within a Writing Collaborative. Wenger (1998) argued that teaching and learning are not implicitly linked. Just because something is taught does not mean it gets learned. This is as true in the classroom where students are the target of instruction as it is in professional development or training where teachers are placed in the role of the learner. Therefore, the architecture of learning should support spaces where learners are "able to invest themselves in communities of practice in the process of approaching a subject matter" (p. 271). Forming a community of practice in the form of a Writing Collaborative may allow teachers to explore writing as a practice and serve to manifest their identities as members of their community—as writers, as lived identities.

The National Writing Project: Toward a Community of Practice

Perhaps one of the best examples of a teacher learning network that supports and advocates the teacher-as-writer model is that of the National Writing Project (NWP). The NWP evolved from one teacher's quest to find better approaches for teaching literature

and writing to his students. Since 1974 when the first NWP site was established, teachers continue to gather all over the country at various sites, sharing and producing writing.

The NWP model as noted by Lieberman and Wood (2003) has at its center the idea that teachers who teach writing should be writers themselves. As such, the summer institutes, which are the backbone of the NWP's popularity and success, stress a social theory of learning with emphasis on collective responsibility. "The NWP approach is to teach writing as a social process, that is, not only as a medium for self-expression but also as a vehicle for learning-in-community" (p.19). Conducting a study in two major NWP sites using a communities of practice lens, Lieberman and Wood set out to uncover how learning occurs when teachers seek out improvement of their own writing and writing practices. They discovered that the hallmarks of the model are ingrained in the social practices of a writing community that value contributions of each member, honor teacher knowledge, create spaces for teacher sharing and dialogue, relinquish ownership of learning to learners, situate learning in practice, provide multiple entry points into the community, focus on learning, share leadership, promote inquiry, and most importantly, encourage professional identities that reflect collective ownership of knowledge.

Whitney (2008) drew similar conclusions when examining the transformative nature of the NWP Summer Institute for teachers. For teachers in her case study, the crux of their learning experiences stemmed from the writing activities, including the sharing of writing in a writing group. More importantly, participation in the NWP increased teachers' confidence and perceptions of themselves as writers. Much of their learning was attributed to authentic conversations about the teaching and learning of writing and

engagement within a professional community formed by the writing groups, suggesting “that writing activities are certainly important sites where issues of stance, authority, and identity are worked out” (p.177).

It was such a community of practice I constructed and studied in my quest to understand how teachers made sense of writing and positioned themselves as writers.

Issues of Identity and Writing: A Sociocultural Perspective

The teacher-as-writer stance encompasses notions of identity, writing, pedagogical practices, and serves as a foundation for investigating identity work with teachers in the area of writing and writing instruction.

Recent literacy research has shifted from using a cognitive lens to one that views literacy and literacy practices, including writing, as a social process (Lewis & Fabos, 2005; McCarthey, 2001). This notion of literacy as a social process has allowed researchers to examine literacy through a social, cultural, critical, and even an identity lens (Bartlett, 2007; Dyson, 2003; Fairbanks & Ariail, 2006; Lensmire, 1998; Moje, Luke, Davies, & Street, 2009; Orellana, 1995). Furthermore, a sociocultural theory of literacy and learning has provided researchers with a landscape in which to study "aspects of people's sense-making, interaction, and learning around texts" (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p.2). The view of writing as a social practice implies that people engage in writing by participating in socially, situated literacy events, learning by apprenticeship and taking on the identities of those who use writing in specific ways (Ivanič, 2004). “Identification is a key concept for this sort of learning; people are likely to begin to

participate in particular practices to the extent that they identify themselves with the values, beliefs, goals and activities of those who engage in those practices” (p. 235).

Viewing literacy and the formation of identities as a social process “has generated close, in-depth research on the literacy practices of actual people, a move that has turned researchers' and theorists' attentions to the roles of texts and literacy practices as tools or media for constructing, narrating, mediating, enacting, performing, enlisting, or exploring identities” (Moje et al., 2009).

Defining identity is often a complicated process because of its importance to a variety of disciplines. For this study identity was viewed as a social construct and defined as “our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are. Reciprocally, it also encompasses other people’s understanding of themselves and others (which includes us)” (Danielewicz, 2001, p.10). With that said, the literature on identity studies, specifically literacy and identity studies, encompasses many stances and defines identity in multiple ways, but collectively it is seen as being social, fluid, and recognized.

Driven by these sociocultural theories of literacy and learning, (NWP & Nagin, 2003; Brooks, 2007) writing— how it is learned, taught, and assessed—has moved from a predominantly skills-based, product-centered approach to one in which writing is viewed as a process, whereby a writer moves through recursive phases in order to bring a piece of writing to completion (Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; NWP & Nagin, 2003).

Coupled with this approach is the idea that writing is a "collaborative endeavor" (Routman, 1996, p. 80), and the development of a writer is best supported in a writing

community whereby the teacher models and shares writing as a valued member (Atwell, 1998; Routman, 1996, 2005; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001). "In the context of teaching writing this implies that teachers also need to be writers, demonstrating the processes involved and providing expert knowledge and advice based on experience" (Cremin, 2006, 415).

It is within this writing instructional framework that the teacher-as-writer model has come to fruition, implying the appropriation of writerly kinds of identities. Although some evidence to the contrary exists, many writing process researchers and practitioners have generally agreed that in order to be an effective teacher of writing, writing teachers must engage in the writing process themselves (Bausch, 2010; Brindley & Jasinski-Schneider, 2002; Daisy, 2009).

Even though more attention has been given to general issues of teacher identity and its relationship to instructional practices, few studies have given attention to teacher identities within specific subject areas and their influence on instruction (Cremin & Baker, 2010; Dix, 2012; Frager, 1994; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009). However, in relation to identity and writing, past research has focused on teacher efficacy, perceptions, and beliefs of writing teachers (Bausch, 2010; Berry, 2006; Bowie, 1996; Brindley & Schneider, 2002; Graham, Harris, Fink, & MacArthur, 2001) as well as the act of writing and the text it produces (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Ivanič, 1994, 1998) and their influences on writing practice. Furthermore, a majority of these studies explored teacher candidates and beginning teachers (Bowie, 1996; Daisy, 2009; Hotchstetler, 2011; Norman & Spencer, 2005;), paying little attention to career status teachers.

While these studies certainly help us to conceptualize teachers' perceptions of and beliefs about writing and writing instruction, very few expand on the ways in which writing shapes one's identity. Additionally, very few of these studies address issues of identity specific to secondary English teachers. In fact, most of the relevant research to date is found primarily in dissertations, reflecting the need to fill current deficiencies in this area. Most importantly, understanding how teachers identify themselves as writers using the communities of practice framework and considerations for how these writing identities influence classroom practice are addressed minimally in current research. In fact, empirical research for how secondary English teachers in a community of practice position themselves as writers by analyzing the discursive practices of the teachers, specifically their talk, has not yet surfaced in the literature.

Educational researchers have identified writing as a critical challenge for teachers and teacher educators (Brooks, 2007). Therefore, it is important to understand the normative practices of a Writing Collaborative and the ways in which its members, secondary English teachers, identify themselves as writers and the implications for writing instruction. This research study was significant in that it provided data which (a) added relevant knowledge to the research on identity and literacy, particularly teachers' identities as writers and considerations for writing instruction (b) identified ways that teachers came to see themselves as writers and professional development conditions that supported their negotiations as writers and (c) assisted teachers in understanding their own processes of writing and their pedagogical value. This study provided a fresh approach and insight for educators, policy makers, and other researchers who concern

themselves with teacher identity and the ways in which it relates to instructional pedagogy specific to writing.

Purpose of the Study

To address the need for more research on secondary English teachers' identities as writers and the implications for instructional practice, I explored the ways in which teachers came to see themselves as writers through engagement in authentic writing experiences. This type of identity work is best observed through a sociocultural lens, using case methodology. Therefore, I created a Writing Collaborative to examine how teachers' identities as writers shape and are shaped by the practices and meanings that emerge from the community. To explore these issues, I addressed the following questions:

1. How do secondary English teachers' identities as writers shape and how are they shaped by the community of the *Writing Collaborative*?
 - a. What practices provide coherence to the Writing Collaborative?
 - b. What meanings do teachers make about writers, writing and themselves as writers within the Writing Collaborative?

Definitions of Significant Terminology

Teacher-as-Writer is the concept that teachers engage in writing outside the classroom and see themselves in some way as writers.

Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2006).

Writing Collaborative is a group of individuals that comes together for the purposes of engaging in writing, sharing writing and supporting one another's development as writers.

Writing process is a holistic process in which a writer moves, recursively, through processes including planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

Inkshedding is an activity in which participants respond in writing to a common prompt, share what they have written with each other, and offer comments about the text to the writer (Horne, 2012).

Overview of the Dissertation

The goal of this study was to explore the ways in which secondary English teachers position themselves as writers and negotiate meanings of writers and writing through participation in the Writing Collaborative. This dissertation comprises seven chapters and appendices. In chapter one I provide a brief background on the key issues in the ongoing debate of whether teachers of writing, especially secondary English teachers, should be writers themselves, the nature of authentic writers and reform efforts focused on teachers and writing, the rationale for the study, a statement of the problem, the research questions, and meanings of key terms.

In chapter two I use prior theory and research to construct a framework that supports and guides the research. Therefore, I present relevant theory to the social nature of learning, communities of practice, teacher identity, positioning, discourse, and language. I demonstrate how these theories and concepts, woven together, provide a unique lens for investigating teachers' identities as writers within the context of a Writing Collaborative.

In chapter three I address the qualitative research methodology for the study, describing the case study design and methods and the use of discourse analysis aimed at examining the “teacher talk” that takes place in the Writing Collaborative as a method of exploring teachers’ writing identities. Next, I describe the research site, the Writing Collaborative, and selection of the teachers. After establishing a context for the study, I describe in detail the procedures for data collection and analysis. I conclude the chapter by addressing trustworthiness, the researcher’s bias, ethical issues and limitations of the study.

In chapter four I address the first sub-question of the study: What practices provide coherence to the Writing Collaborative? Using thick description I describe the practices that were instrumental in building community. Specifically, I discuss the practice of sharing and its dimensions, and the ways in which those practices built the community, supported the meanings of teachers’ experiences, and shaped their identities as writers. The share practices consisted of the following: (a) interject humor; (b) praise and encourage; (c) support and affirm; (d) ask questions; (e) explore ideas; (f) share knowledge and beliefs; and (g) narrate personal stories.

Chapter five addresses the second sub-question of the study: What meanings do teachers make about writers, writing, and themselves as writers within the Writing Collaborative? The purpose of this chapter is to present the following categories of meanings teachers made about writers and writing: (a) definitions of writers; (b) purposes of writing; (c) writing ideas; (d) writing as a process; and (e) personal aspects of writing.

In chapter six I present the multiple writer identities teachers enacted through the share practices of the community and the meanings they made about writing, writers, and themselves as writers. For each teacher, I discuss specific writer identities and the ways in which they authored themselves within the context of the Writing Collaborative.

Finally, chapter seven summarizes my findings from the study through the lens of Wenger's (1998) modes of belonging and discusses implications for teachers as they relate to professional development and writing instructional practices in the classroom. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE

Learning transforms our identities: it transforms our ability to participate in the world by changing all at once who we are, our practices, and our communities.
(Wenger, 1998, p. 227)

In this chapter, I review pertinent theories and research that frame my exploration of teachers as writers. To provide the foundation for my theoretical approach to this study, I briefly describe a sociocultural approach to teaching and learning on which Lev Vygotsky had a major influence. Second, I detail the communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) theory that serves as the major theoretical frame for this study. In doing so, I examine primary concepts of the theory that provide an appropriate lens for examining identity work among teachers in a Writing Collaborative. Third, I define identity and its constructs, drawing primarily from the work of Wenger (1998) and Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998), supported by recent studies in teacher identity. The studies of teacher identity development by Janet Alsup (2006) and Jane Danielewicz (2001) illustrate from a research perspective the power of discourse to affect teachers' identities. Fourth, I draw from theoretical and empirical research to examine the concept of discourse and its relationship to identity. Specifically, I review language as a discourse and make a compelling argument for examining teacher talk as a means for studying

secondary English teachers' identities as writers within the context of the Writing Collaborative.

Sociocultural Approach: A Vygotskian Influence

A sociocultural approach to teaching and learning, in its most basic sense, supports the notion that knowledge and what is constituted as knowledge, is socially constructed. It contests the notion that learning is merely a transmission of information from one to another, but rather views it as a process of collaboration, joint activity, and shared knowledge (Mercer, 2000). Additionally, a sociocultural theory posits language and other symbol systems as mediators of human action situated within specific social, historical, and cultural contexts (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). These sociocultural factors help us to understand the thinking, learning, and development of humans.

From a sociocultural perspective, then, humans are seen as creatures who have a unique capacity for communication and whose lives are normally led within groups, communities and societies based on shared 'ways with words,' ways of thinking, social practices and tools for getting things done. (Mercer, 2004, p.139)

To appreciate this theoretical groundwork, I turn to the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky from whose roots derive an understanding of teaching and learning from a sociocultural perspective.

Vygotsky, most noted for his development of a cultural historical theory of psychological development, emphasized sociocultural processes as the main influence on human mental development (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). At the center of his theory lies the understanding that human cognition and learning occur through interactions in cultural, historical, and social contexts rather than arising from within the individual person

(Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003). In conceptualizing the development of a child's speech and thought, Vygotsky (1986) indicated "the true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social, but from the social to the individual" (p. 36). In other words, thinking and the development of our thoughts are situated within the various social contexts surrounding us and is a product of our interactions. Through these social interactions we discover the practices, discourses, language and other knowledge symbols within the culture.

Another important Vygotskian theory that is significant for understanding the theory of *communities of practice* is his notion of semiotic mediation. Semiotic mediation consists of tools, signs, and symbols constructed during the course of social interaction (Holland et al., 1998). These socially mediated resources not only shape human activity, but they also serve to alter the social environments in which they are constructed (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995).

Vygotsky placed greater emphasis on language than any other modality, recognizing that "higher mental functioning is mediated by socioculturally evolved tools and signs" (Wertsch, 1988, p. 85). The concern for these semiotic tools becomes important aspects of investigating social activity because they "develop within a locus of social activity, a place in the social world, that identifies and organizes them" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 36). Furthermore, these tools are used by people as part of behavioral routines, signs for others, and signs for managing or directing their own actions, serving as the basic process in the formation of an identity (Holland et al., 1998). Given that semiotic mediation occurs wherever discourse occurs, the purposes and uses of these

tools, particularly language, become important when examining how knowledge is constructed and identities are shaped among the teachers in the Writing Collaborative.

A final Vygotskian concept that serves to substantiate my use of the communities of practice theory for investigating teacher writer identity is his emphasis on the “collective.” According to this concept, “carrying out activity is a joint-collective enactment by a group of people through their social interaction” (Davydov & Kerr, 1995, p. 15). Though referring to the development of children and their interactions with adults and others, Vygotsky’s concept of the collective can easily be applied to a group of teachers because he believed that the consciousness of an individual first developed on the social level between people then on the level of the individual. In this sense, the knowledge built within the Writing Collaborative stems from the collective activity of the teachers.

These Vygotskian constructs are significant for situating learning and shaping identities in a sociocultural context, specifically as they occur in communities of practice such as a Writing Collaborative.

Communities of Practice

No matter of age, gender, race or occupation, as humans we have all been members of a community of practice at some time in our lives. In fact, Wenger (1998) argued that communities of practices can be found everywhere, supporting his claim that most people hold multiple memberships in a variety of communities of practice. These “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2006) form through all kinds of social

activities, such as our hobbies, families, health care and business organizations, and school settings among others. To frame his theory, Wenger (1998) used a sociocultural approach, specifically a social theory of learning based on Vygotsky. In the sections that follow I will outline the major concepts and elements associated with the communities of practice theory and its goodness of fit for this study, focusing on learning as social participation in which members are active participants in the practices of the community and author identities in relation to the community.

A Social Theory of Learning

There are many theories that address the ways in which we learn. In fact, many of these theories stem from the fields of social psychology and anthropology, debunking traditional notions of learning (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004) found most often in educational programs. Lave (1996), arguing in favor of a social rather than a psychological theory of learning, criticized research on learning that further marginalizes and impoverishes the learner by focusing on learning as an individualistic process. She states,

It seems imperative to explore ways of understanding learning that do not naturalize and underwrite divisions of social inequality in our society. A reconsideration of learning as a social, collective, rather than individual, psychological phenomenon offers the only way beyond the current state of affairs that I could envision at the present time. (p. 149)

Her concern, particularly as it applies to teaching and learning in an educational setting, was that too much research puts the center of attention on the teacher and instruction by

way of prescribed curriculum, methods, and programs rather than on the learning of the learner.

In their earlier work, Lave & Wenger (1991) declared “learning is not merely situated in practice—as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-world” (p. 35). Wenger (1998), in proposing the social theory of learning to which he subscribes, noted several assumptions that informed his proposal: (a) humans are innately social, (b) knowledge represents competence respective to valued enterprises, (c) knowing is active engagement in the world, and (d) learning produces meaning. Armed with these assumptions, he placed learning through social participation as the primary focus of this theory. “Participation here refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (p. 4).

Four main axes come together to form the framework of Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning: (a) social structure, (b) situated experience, (c) social practice, and (d) identity. In his previous work with Jean Lave (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the theories of social structure and situated experience were central to the concept of *legitimate peripheral participation* used to denote learning. They studied various communities of practice, including midwives, butchers, tailors, and non-drinking alcoholics, to explore the negotiations of meaning and practices that reflected the community. The focus of their work looked at how newcomers were apprenticed into the community. The

apprenticeship metaphor demonstrates how learning occurs in informal learning communities where novices learned through observation and work with knowledgeable others (Rogoff, 1994). However, largely unexplored from the original theory was a specific focus on the latter two axes of identity and social practice which have now been given utmost priority in Wenger's theory today and thus more appealing for those interested in researching learning in a social context such as educational settings. This focus on identities in practice is one element that made the Writing Collaborative ideal for studying the ways in which teachers negotiated an identity as a writer.

The Model

The notion of a community is definitely not a new concept. Since the beginning of human existence, man has formed and engaged in a variety of social settings, reflecting their work, interests, relationships, and societal pursuits. Communities of practice, its conceptualization and application, can be found in research in the fields of business, management, information and technology, policy, industry, medical and healthcare, organizations, (Amin & Roberts, 2006; Barton & Tusting, 2005; Wenger, 2004) and most recently its application in the field of education with a focus on teachers, including beginning teachers (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Woodgate-Jones, 2012), science educators (Avery & Carlsen, 2001; Fazio, 2009; Supovitz, 2002), and teacher education (Au, 2002).

The model consists of four interdependent components: *community*, *practice*, *meaning*, and *identity*. Wenger (1998) described communities of practice as a group of individuals who share an interest and a passion for a particular subject. Learning occurs

within the community through the changing participation, development of practices, (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the negotiation of the identities of its members (Wenger, 1998). Specifically, a *community* is formed through mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). At the center of this formation resides the collective learning of the community members. The concept of *practice* is the cohesive factor surrounding the community and refers to the shared enterprises, both explicit and tacit, by which members are able to sustain mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998; 2000). “It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do. In this sense, practice is always social practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 47). *Meaning* is negotiated within a community of practice and inextricably linked to *identity* (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, through meaningful participation, individuals and groups make meanings and shape and mold identities (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011).

Lave and Wenger (1991) posited communities of practice afford members an opportunity to absorb gradually and to be absorbed into a culture of practice whereby shared meanings, belonging, and increased understandings are the outcome. *Reification*, according to Wenger (1998), is “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into the ‘thingness’” (p. 58). However, reification does not simply imply formation of objects; it can refer to both process and a product. Reification then becomes the tools we use to “play” in the community, helping to shape our experience.

One of the most important concepts in Wenger’s (1998) theory of communities of practice is that of *identity*. Unlike the previous co-authored text on legitimate peripheral

participation with Jean Lave, Wenger, in this extended theory, views identity as a significant component of a social theory of learning. According to Wenger, our identities are built through the negotiations of meaning within communities of practice. Because there is a succinct connection between one's identity and practice, formation of a community becomes a site of negotiation and renegotiation as members figure out "ways of being a person in that context" (p.148). In this sense, the practices of the community become vital to the shaping of our identities as teachers. While many scholars have defined and recognized identity, often in conflicting ways, Wenger specifically defines identity in this way:

Who we are lies in the way we live day to day, not just in what we think or say about ourselves, though that is of course part (but only part) of the way we live. Nor does identity consist solely of what others think or say about us; though that too is part of the way we live. Identity in practice is defined socially not merely because it is reified in a social discourse of the self and of social categories, but also because it is produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities. (p. 151)

A final element in Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory is that of identification and negotiability. According to Wenger, "our identities form in this kind of tension between our investment in various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter most in those contexts. Identity formation is thus a dual process" (p. 190). In other words, our participation in a community shapes our identities as members, but also as members of the community we possess the ability to shape the community. In order to shape the community, members must negotiate the meanings important within that community. This negotiation entails engaging with the members of

the community, contributing to the meaning making of the community, recognizing a joint undertaking, and sharing resources (Wenger, 1998).

Although communities of practice theory has been applied minimally in educational research, generally in studies related to teacher education and beginning teachers, as compared to other fields, studies that have been conducted argued for the benefits of teachers engaging in communities of practice, particularly in content-area disciplines like science and math. Fazio (2009), in his case study of secondary science teachers, determined that participation in a community of practice focused on science inquiry through action research positively impacted collaboration and reflection about curriculum and instructional practices. Furthermore, the teachers in the study experienced change in their views of science inquiry methods and an increase in self-efficacy as teachers of science. Cuddapah and Clayton (2011), in their study of a new teacher cohort, determined that teachers' engagement in the practices of the community supported teachers in making meaning of their experiences as new science teachers and their pursuits to embrace new identities as teachers. In a similar study focused exclusively on the teaching and learning of science, Avery and Carlsen (2001) explored science teachers' participation in external communities of practice, providing them opportunities to engage in authentic science learning. Apparent from the study was the idea that teachers' beliefs about students' ability to conduct science research stem from their own experiences with science and identities as scientists as illuminated by participation in authentic settings for science engagement. Finally, Hodges and Cady (2012) concluded that teachers' mathematics identities take shape across multiple

communities that focus on the teaching and learning of math. As teachers move in and out of these communities, many of which include such activities as mathematics workshops, professional development sessions, and teacher groups, they carry with them identities that require reconciliation and negotiation between the conflicting goals and beliefs of each one. These studies demonstrate that teachers' learning in content specific communities of practice serve as contexts for exploring and negotiating new identities. Identities as members are in part how individuals come to participate and make sense of their participation in a community. Therefore, it is important to understand the nature of identities and how they are defined.

Identities

Although the concept of identity continues to be studied and defined in various ways, researchers generally agree on several elements: our identities are fluid and ever-changing; they are situated and determined by specific context at any given time and influenced by communities through our lived experiences.

Defining identity, however, is a challenging task as identity has been, and continues to be, studied and defined in a variety of fields, particularly in the area of social sciences and humanities, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and education where work in identity has examined both students' and teachers' identities. A review of the literature in different fields produces various definitions of identity, nuances that reflect the philosophical orientation the researcher brings to a study. The concept of identity ranges from discussions of identity as a self-concept concerned with beliefs and knowledge to cultural identity in which a person is identified with certain

cultural or ethnic groups to a sociolinguist definition that draws heavily from the language one uses to communicate or be recognized as a "certain person" (Gee, 2001) to the idea of multiple identities constructed through culture and individual agency (Holland et al., 1998). As a result, identity, its conceptualization, definition, and application, are important to understanding how it “can be used as an analytical tool for studying important issues of theory and practice in education” (Gee, 2001, p.100).

In forming my own definition of identity, I drew from several identity theories within sociocultural and sociohistorical theory as well as conceptual understandings derived from research. Specifically, I drew from the theoretical work of Wenger (1998), Holland, et al. (1998), and Bakhtin (1981). Finally, I found it helpful to draw from Danielewicz’s (2001) and Alsup’s (2006) research on teacher identities with preservice teachers to help me explain the role of discourse in understanding how teachers negotiate identities as writers.

Defining Identity

I begin with a quote from Jane Danielewicz (2001) that summarizes my immediate notion of identity. She states, “Identity is our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are. Reciprocally, it also encompasses other people’s understanding of themselves and others (which includes us)” (p. 10). In other words, I define identity as who we feel we are in the world and how others see us. Additionally, I view identities as fluid, in a constant state of change, multiple. We have identities that encompass our various ways of being, situated—contingent upon context, dialogic—shaped by our interactions with others, and socially developed. As a result, discourses,

“ways of interacting socially significant identities and associated practices in society through language (social language) and ways of acting, interacting, valuing, knowing, believing and using things, tools, and technologies at appropriate times and places” (Gee, 2011, pp.108-109) become a vital part of my definition. From this perspective, discourse is linked to identity. Discourse is not just language, our acts of speaking and writing; it also involves those practices that become a part of our engagement in specific contexts. For example, a group of teacher writers may take up discourses that reflect writer identities such as talk about composing text, sharing pieces of writing, keeping a journal, using the language of a writer, or using a writer’s tools. Collectively, these discourses, the way they use language to reflect on these practices and the meanings they make of them, act as mediators, helping to shape their identities as writers. The collective learning that takes place among the teachers results in the practices that serve to form the community and “the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context” (Wenger, 1998, p. 149). For this reason, I turn first to the concept of identities in practice to undergird the theoretical concepts that inform my definition of identity and the ways in which this study approached identity work.

Identities in Practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe legitimate peripheral participation as situated learning through concrete activity in social engagement. In this manner, newcomers to the community arrive, learn from, and contribute to the activities of the established community. Over time, these newcomers are apprenticed by the old-timers into the community and transform their identities from newcomers to members. This negotiation

of identity is ongoing as teachers engage in the practices and meaning making of the community (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, “identities become important outcomes of participation in communities of practice” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 57). As such, newcomers eventually learn how to talk, behave, and think like full-fledged members of the community, inextricably linking their identities and practices. Wenger (1998) quickly pointed out that our membership in a community is only one of many possible identities. He recognized that our identities are not formed completely inside the community, that we bring identities from other communities, creating a “nexus of multi-membership” (p. 159). Unlike some theories of identity that cast people into categories, labels, or roles, identities in practice are lived experiences one in which identities are constantly negotiated in a social context.

For Wenger (1998), there is a distinct connection between identity and practice. Historically and socially, practice includes what is stated, but also what is implied. It includes the language, tools, documents, procedures, rules, and shared understandings developed over time that comes to constitute the community (Wenger, 1998). It is through practice that a community is formed and the place where negotiation of identities are found. In this respect, Wenger understood that a negotiation

...may be silent; teachers may not necessarily talk directly about that issue. But whether or not they address the question directly, they deal with it through the way they engage in action with one another and relate to one another. Inevitably, our practices deal with the profound issue of how to be a human. (p. 149)

The work of identity, therefore, is ongoing, a “constant becoming” (p. 154). In doing so, we constantly revise or acquire new identities as we move through a succession of

participatory forms. As a result, our identities form trajectories within and across the various communities of practices of which we are members. These various trajectories, continuous and fluid, provide access within, around, or out of the community and create occasions for renegotiating one's identities, giving meaning to their engagement in practice (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger (1998) offered these characterizations to draw a parallel between identity and practice that highlight its rich and complex relation:

- (1) *Lived*. Identity is not merely a category, a personality trait, a role, or a label; it is more fundamentally an experience that involves both participation and reification. Hence it is more diverse and more complex than categories, traits, roles, or labels would suggest.
- (2) *Negotiated*. Identity is a becoming; the work of identity is on-going and pervasive. It is not confined to specific periods of life, like adolescence, or to specific settings, like the family.
- (3) *Social*. Community membership gives the formation of identity a fundamentally social character. Our membership manifests itself in the familiarity we experience with certain social contexts.
- (4) *A learning process*. An identity is a trajectory in time that incorporates both past and future into the meaning of the present.
- (5) *A nexus*. An identity combines multiple forms of membership through a process of reconciliation across boundaries of practice.
- (6) *A local-global interplay*. An identity is neither narrowly local to activities nor abstractly global. Like practice, it is interplay of both. (p. 163)

These parallels summarize the concept of identity by capturing the connection between individual engagement and the formation of communities of practice.

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) offer an ideal lens for examining the ways teachers in the Writing Collaborative negotiate identities as writers. None of the

teachers in the study had ever been involved in a Writing Collaborative or group, and thus were newcomers, making it interesting to observe how they contributed to the construction of the communities of practice and how they enacted membership in it.

The Work of Holland and Colleagues

Situated in anthropological and cultural studies and following Mead, Holland et al. (1998) posited that identities develop through social practice. They argue that when we tell others who we are we are also telling ourselves, and in turn, we attempt to behave as though we are what we claimed. Similar to Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), Holland and her colleagues

focus on the development of identities and agency specific to practices and activities situated in historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed “worlds”: recognized fields or frames of social life, such as romance, mental illness and its treatment, domestic relations, Alcoholics Anonymous, academia, and local politics. (p. 7)

There are similarities between Holland et al. (1998) and Wenger’s (1998) concept of identity that further enrich the conceptual framework for this study. First, the notion of *figured worlds* is similar to Wenger’s communities of practice. Holland and her colleagues referred to a figured world as “a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). Figured worlds serve as the context for the meanings people make of actions, behaviors, performances, and understandings of themselves. In other words, they provide the context for people’s activities and practices, thus a location for the formation

of identities. Thus for this study, the Writing Collaborative became a figured world, a community of practice, where teachers engaged in the practice of writing, negotiated meaning, and formed identities as writers.

Another parallel between Holland et al. (1998) and Wenger (1998) that lends support to my conceptual framework is the emphasis of identities in practice and the negotiation of identity. Holland et al., drawing from Bakhtin, refer to this context of identity as a “space of authoring.” In constructing meaning, we “author” the world, drawing from the words, languages, and voices of others (Holland et al., 1998).

According to Bakhtin (1981), language is never unitary, and each utterance is laced with specific social, historical, and cultural moments. In other words, “when we speak, we take up the social languages and genres that are already in existence in the language and cultural communities in which we actively participate” (Lee, 2004, p. 129). In this way, meanings of the words we use are continually shaped and reshaped as we engage in dialogue and are exposed to various speakers’ voices (Mercer, 2000). These “voices” typically involve tension (Holland et al., 1998) as we struggle to hear our own voices, constructing our identities in the process. For example, Dix (2012), studying primary teachers’ writing instruction, discovered that they were challenged by the shifts in identity made available to them through their own and others’ writing discourses as they engaged in conversations and collaborations about their teaching. Most sought to project themselves as “certain kinds of writing teachers engaged in certain kinds of practices” (p. 415).

Although I envisioned the Writing Collaborative as a community of learners, a place where it was possible to explore and “tinker with” writing, the constraints often associated with “school writing,” its expectations and packaged programs along with the teachers’ competing identities as writers and teachers of writing required an orchestration of these various voices (Holland et al., 1998) by some teachers. The intrusion of identities and practices related to their school lives seemed apparent.

Positioning as Identity

In understanding identity as a learning process, the concept of positioning is extremely helpful because it helps to explain the ways in which individuals construct identities through participation in a social context. As defined by Harré and van Langenhove (1991),

positioning can be understood as the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations. (p. 395)

In other words, our identities are shaped by our own perceptions and the perceptions of others within specific contexts in which we position ourselves or are positioned by others (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). Holland et al. (1998) contended that individuals figure who they are and who others are through narratives and storylines that position them in social and cultural ways. Therefore, positioning can take two forms: (a) reflexive positioning in which individuals position themselves and (b) interactive positioning in which individuals position others (Davies & Harré 1990). During social interaction individuals constitute and reconstitute who they are by participating in various discursive practices,

much of which takes place during conversation (Davies and Harré 1990). In a dialogic exchange individuals always utter from a particular position (Bakhtin, 1981). Therefore, “positioning locates people in a particular conversational space” (Yamakawa, Forman, Ansell, 2005).

Although an under-researched area of identity and important to my research, only a few recent studies have examined the ways in which teachers are positioned and position themselves as writers in the writing classroom (Cremin & Baker, 2010). Cremin & Baker (2010) examined two primary teachers of writing and their talk around written text they produced as models alongside children. Using positioning theory as a lens for examining the teachers’ writer identities enacted in the classroom, the researchers discovered teachers experienced conflicts as they negotiated the boundary between seeing themselves as writers and writer-teachers. In a related study, McKinney and Giorgis (2009) conceptualized discourse as one of positioning derived from autobiographical texts, observations, and interviews. They used current theory from sociolinguistics, predominantly the work of Gee and Wortham, to substantiate their use of texts to examine the ways in which literacy specialists performed and positioned themselves as writers and teachers of teachers of writing. Language, specifically the autobiographical text, was just one approach for building the literacy specialists’ identities. Gee (2011) explains, “Making visible and recognizable *who* we are and *what* we are doing always involves a great deal more than ‘just language’” (p. 34). In order to uncover the literacy specialists’ identities, the researchers had to examine the various discourses within the context of their social practice. These multiple discourses, for some of the specialists,

worked in conflicting ways as they attempted to navigate identities as a writers and, by virtue of their position, as teachers of teachers of writing.

Positioning provides a useful framework for examining the norms and practices through which identity construction occurs in communities of practice (Yamakawa, Forman, Ansell, 2005). Using positioning, I examined the dialogic interactions of the Writing Collaborative, which allowed me to explore the ways in which the teachers positioned themselves or others as writers and teachers of writing.

Studies in Teachers' Identities: Perspectives from the Field

In reviewing recent literature on identity work, it is a challenge to arrive at a concise definition of identity that is consistent across the field of education. In their review of teacher education literature, for example, Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) discovered specific issues regarding a definition of teacher identity, issues related to the role of self, agency, and emotion and the greater use of narrative and discourse. Despite the variations, the theory of identity and its related concepts have been seen as an important analytical tool (Gee, 2001) for understanding teacher identities in teacher education programs, literacy studies, and for professional educators in the field.

Additionally, discourse has been cited as a powerful concept in many recent definitions and studies as a way to examine, particularly, how pre-service and beginning teachers negotiate identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011). Therefore, from a research perspective, the work of Jane Danielewicz (2001) and her proposal for pedagogy of identity development with preservice teachers and Janet Alsup's (2006) teacher identity

discourses were helpful in my exploration of teachers as writers, particularly the ways in which identities were produced through participation in discourse.

Danielewicz (2001), using primarily interviews along with written artifacts and informal observations, traced the development of six students through the teacher education program in which she taught. Unique to her study was the pedagogical approach she utilized in her work with the students in a quest to uncover not only the process of identity construction, but also the frameworks for assisting students in this identity development, including engagement in multiple discourses. Many of the examples she used to illustrate the ways in which she supports teacher identity development in her classroom was through the use of writing and collaborative environments. This type of pedagogy is “the process of structuring of activities, interactions, events, and assignments in teaching according to the ideas that are congruent with or grow out of theories of identity development” (Danielewicz, 2001, p.133).

According to Danielewicz (2001), discourses serve as a powerful means through which identities are produced. “Discourse, which is manifested through language, consists of a system of beliefs and attitudes and values that exist within particular social and cultural practices” (p. 11). Thus, identity develops through social interaction and engagement with a multitude of discourses of which language is the primary focus. As a result, a discourse community emerges and its members are recognized by those who “speak the same language” (p. 22). With that stated, Danielewicz made clear that one’s identities cannot be simply reduced to something concrete or recognizable through language. Instead identities are formed through processes. “The bottom line is that no

matter what the context, we are continually engaged in becoming something or someone” (p.10). As a community of practice, the Writing Collaborative served as the context for negotiating writer identities, not only from its normative practices, but also through the discourses it fostered.

Another significant concept that Danielewicz (2001) presented in her work relevant to this study was that of a collective identity. Throughout her study of the preservice teachers, Danielewicz not only explored the identity constructions of the individual students, but also the identity of the students as a group of teachers.

Collective identities arise, like individual identities, through social interactions but particularly when those interactions occur in or around institutions (the public high school, the University) and with group insiders (cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and school administrators). Social categorization experiences (instances when other people recognize you as a member of a group or not) are especially relevant in constructing professional identities. (p.112)

Although defined within the context of the teacher education program, the idea of a collective identity has significance in relation to the identities that emerged of the Writing Collaborative. In other words, being recognized as a writer or non-writer and accepted by or not accepted by other teachers in the Writing Collaborative as a writer was crucial in terms of the Collaborative’s sustainability as a community of writers. Danielewicz (2001) stated, “When individuals are working together, the collective, public, social aspects of identities are reinforced” (p. 149). As Wenger (1998) emphasized, participation shapes our experiences, and it also shapes those communities in which we participate. Therefore, “our ability (or inability) to shape the practice of our communities is an important aspect of our experience of participation (p. 57).

In a similar study, Alsup (2006) explored the identity development of six preservice English education students. Alsup, drawing primarily from the work of James Gee, the notion of multiple discourses, and narrative analysis, used the concept of borderland discourse as a metaphor to illustrate how preservice teachers transition from being students to becoming teachers. For Alsup, conceptualizing identity as a narrative allowed her to uncover a “borderland discourse” her students encountered as they struggled with forming their identities as professional teachers. This discursive space, where the personal and professional selves of the preservice teachers often came in contact, created a tension and dissonance, “leading toward the ideological integration of multiple senses of self” (p. 36). Alsup claimed that preservice teachers often have to give up some portion of their personal selves as they transform into professional educators, therefore, she proposed a binary notion of teacher identity whereby the students exhibited tension between their personal and professional selves. The simplistic view of professional identity is learning the rules or taking up the tools of the trade. “However, reaching the in-between ground, the place of becoming, the space of ambiguity and reflection, *is* the goal – this is the space with which we want our preservice teachers to experiment” (p. 9).

Alsup’s (2006) study, more importantly the notion of borderland discourse, is important to the study of teacher identity. It was primarily through borderland discourse that the preservice teachers were able to merge both personal and professional subjectivities, thus helping to form a professional identity as a teacher. Most often, the tension during this process conjured up cognitive dissonance, emotional discomfort, and

contrasting ideologies of what it meant to be a teacher. However, encouraging a borderland discourse was necessary, and in order to be successful teachers, “they must have experience with transformational discourse that helps them integrate their various personal and professional spaces” (p. 144).

In sum, when viewed as a socially constructed process, the formation of identities relies upon interactions in social and cultural contexts of which multiple discourses play a key role. Who we are is shaped by these various contexts along with our self-perceptions in these contexts as well as how others see us or how we are positioned as a result (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). Furthermore, as active teachers in a variety of discourses, we have the ability to shape our selves. Likewise, discourses can affect the development of our identities (Danielewicz, 2001). These concepts, coupled with the theory of communities of practice, were important to the formation of the Writing Collaborative in which active engagement and teacher interaction occurred.

Discourse

Defining Discourse

The aforementioned studies beg the question “What is discourse?” Discourse has become an important theoretical perspective for examining teaching and learning in social settings, as evidenced by the work of Danielewicz (2001) and Alsup (2006), although its application can be found in a variety of disciplines, particularly in the area of sociolinguistics (Gee & Green, 1998). To align with the dynamic and complex nature of classrooms and other school settings, researchers in education have woven, combined, and, in some cases, developed other approaches to study discourse (Gee & Green, 1998;

Rex et al., 2010). Specifically, discourse and discourse analysis approaches in education have been used to understand how knowledge is constructed in social contexts and how this knowledge shapes and is shaped by the various discursive activity; to examine the practices that are taken up within a social setting (Gee & Green, 1998); and more recently to explore issues of teacher identity (Alsup, 2006; Cohen, 2010; Danielewicz, 2001; Dix, 2012; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009).

Many definitions of discourse occur in both theoretical and empirical literature and are derived from a variety of disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, sociolinguistics and literacy studies among others (Alsup, 2006; Gee & Green, 1998). Thus, explicitly defining one's understanding of discourse becomes of great importance in terms of a research study. Historically, discourse from a sociolinguistic perspective meant the use of language during the act of speaking particularly language that was beyond a single sentence (Erickson, 2004). With the influence of theorists such as Foucault and Bourdieu, the meaning of discourse among sociolinguists was expanded to include written language, a person's way of dress, use of social space, and any use of signs that implied meanings about how one was positioned or positioned oneself in the environment. Moreover, some theorists contend that discourse is contextually, historically, and socially produced. Therefore, researchers are interested in analyzing not only spoken and written language, but also the practices, symbols, tools, ideas, objects and resources an individual or group of individuals use to represent and create meaning (Alba-Juez, 2009; Erickson, 2004).

The work of James Gee (2011), a sociolinguist and reading educator, and his conceptualization of discourse and its connection to identity supported this examination of secondary English teachers' negotiations of their identities within the Writing Collaborative. As Gee stated, "When any human being acts and interacts in a given context, others recognize that person as acting and interacting as a certain 'kind of person' or even as several different 'kinds'" (p. 99). In this manner, our identities are linked to our various performances in society (Gee, 2001). Gee placed emphasis on context and building identities in and through language, arguing that language is a tool for building identities and getting recognized in a certain way, in a certain time, and in a certain place.

In the broadest sense, we make meaning by using language to say things that, in actual contexts of use, amount, as well, to doing things and being things. These things we do and are (identities) they come to exist in the world and they, too, bring about other things in the world. We use language to build things of the world and to engage in world building. (p. 16)

From this perspective, language is more than just a vehicle for communicating information; language allows us to do things and to be things. It allows us to engage in actions and activities and take on different identities within various social contexts (Gee, 2011).

People build identities and participate in activities not just through language, but also by integrating "language together with other stuff" (Gee, 2011, p.28) To clarify this "other stuff," Gee made a distinction between discourse with a capital "D" and discourse with a lower case "d" (language-in-use) in describing his theory. He defined Discourse,

with a capital “D,” as the ways in which “language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity” (p. 29). In other words, it takes more than just language to shape our identities. The teachers in the Writing Collaborative participated in the discourses of the community by thinking like writers, talking like writers, using the tools of writers, composing texts, and sharing these texts. In essence, the teachers were able to “pull off” writers’ discourses. Gee referred to these as a type of “identity kit,” one in which a person uses specific language, actions, tools, and beliefs to be recognized as a specific person (identity) who engages in specific activities (practices) (Gee, 2001; 2011).

A Bakhtinian Lens

The major concepts of discourse and language by Mikhail M. Bakhtin serve to further enrich the conceptualizations of language and identity presented in this chapter. According to Bakhtin, (1986) everything we do as humans involves the use of language. Bakhtin’s (1981) highly complex concept of language and the ways in which it evolves within social interaction is an important concept to consider when examining a social theory of learning, particularly for illuminating language use. For Bakhtin (1981), “verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the further reaches of abstract meaning” (p. 259). In this sense, language and social interaction are woven together to create dialogue. It is through dialogic exchange that knowledge is constructed and selves are shaped (Danielewicz, 2001).

Dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981) is a key concept applied to language, allowing us to conceive how learning takes place in a social environment. According to Bakhtin, language is in the form of individual utterances, which are laced with multiple meanings from other voices. The dialogic nature of language, in Bakhtinian terms, indicates that no one speaker's words are truly his or her own. In essence, the dialogic exchange consists of two parts: utterance and answer. A speaker calls out and another responds (Bakhtin, 1981), serving to create meaning between speakers. During social interaction, speakers build on utterances from one another; making the words they use "half someone else's" (p. 293). In this way, the utterance of one speaker and the answer of another form the significant aspects of dialogic exchange (Danielewicz, 2001). As dialogue continues, individuals alternate between being speakers and listeners, actively orienting themselves to response and understanding (Bakhtin, 1986). As such, "the social knowledge or experience that is created between speakers and listeners is always a collaborative, mutual effort" (Danielewicz, 2001). It is at this intersection where the seeds of learning take place, recognizing that the production of meaning in dialogue is a continual activity (Holland, et al., 1998). Therefore "in a productive language-learning environment, the learner is subject to a rich and varied range of utterances and is encouraged to participate in the discourse" (Landay, 2004). In sum, Bakhtin (1981) described the exchange this way:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (p.276)

Using a Bakhtinian lens, one can imagine a community of practice where language is rich, social interaction is lively, and teachers share ideas through discursive practices (Landay, 2004).

Talk as Discourse

Linguistically, when we think of language, speaking and writing immediately come to mind. While many of us may not write on a consistent basis, talk, however, is a daily occurrence for almost all of us. Talk, as a discourse, is always accomplished locally, is influenced by the social environment (Erickson, 2004), and ultimately serves as a tool for making meaning. “We cannot, then, understand language use simply in terms of information transfer between individuals. Every time we talk with someone, we become involved in a collaborative endeavor in which meanings are negotiated and some common knowledge is mobilized” (Mercer, 2000, p. 6). Seen in this way, talk can generate group knowledge, what Mercer calls collective thinking.

Examining talk in social settings, particularly classrooms or professional development settings (Clark & Florio-Ruane, 2001; Mercer, 2000; Mercer & Howe, 2012), has been one method for exploring teacher knowledge, learning, and identity (Cohen, 2010; Deneroff, 2006; Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006). Fairbanks and LaGrone (2006) used talk as discourse to examine the ways teachers in a research group negotiated and transformed representations of their practice. Specifically, they analyzed exploratory talk (Mercer, 2000) as a way to understand how the teachers constructed knowledge about their practice. The authors concluded that the “forms of talk interacted in complex ways to support teacher reflection and the transformation of their understanding of

research and practice” (Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006, p.14). Cohen (2010) also used talk as discourse to study teachers’ professional identities and negotiations within professional conversations regarding curriculum and instruction. Using discourse theory from Gee, Cohen coined the term “teacher identity talk” to identify three types of talk from the data which consisted of observations of planning and professional development meetings and informal conversations. These types of talk included personal storytelling, reflective talk, and analytical talk. Cohen’s findings indicated that teachers used reflective talk more often as a strategy for contextualizing and recognizing professional identity bids. Finally, Deneroff (2006) utilized specific theorists (Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger) to define a discourse of inquiry among high school science teachers with talk as a mediator. Analysis of talk from professional development sessions provided a method for uncovering identities in that it revealed “taken-as-shared meanings attached to teachers’ ideas about practice” (Deneroff, 2006, p.16).

Additionally, another line of research of talk that lends conceptual support to my theoretical framework is the work conducted by Neil Mercer (2000). Through observational studies of children’s conversations, Mercer and colleagues (Mercer & Howe, 2012) identified three methods for analyzing types of talk in classroom interactions: *disputational*, *cumulative talk* and *exploratory talk*. Disputational talk is marked by disagreement and individual decision making. Those involved in this sort of talk do not try to work together or work out their differences. Cumulative talk involves speakers building on what others have said. Often this talk is positive and results in cumulative knowledge. It is characterized by repetitive, confirmatory, and elaborated

talk. Speakers using cumulative talk might complete the other speaker's statements or thoughts, repeat a key idea stated, or take opportunities to expand a thought. Exploratory talk involves speakers engaging in critical conversation in which ideas are negotiated and decisions jointly made. Mercer (2000) pointed out that in this type of talk "reasoning is more visible" (p.146) and the knowledge produced is publicly accountable. Speakers using exploratory talk may question another speaker's statements, appropriately challenge a speaker's comments, or suggest a topic for discussion. "Language also enables members to construct an identity for their group, and roles and identities for themselves within it" (p. 129).

Examining the conversations, the talk, which took place among the teachers in the Writing Collaborative, became essential to understanding how they took up the practices of the collaborative and enacted various writer identities.

I present this section on discourse and language for two reasons. First, it helped to clarify my understanding of discourse and language and its relationship to identity construction. Also, it opened up possibilities for analysis of data, focusing on "teacher identity talk" (Cohen, 2010, p. 474). More importantly, language and discourse were central to understanding what took place inside the Writing Collaborative.

Unfortunately, Wenger's theory of communities of practice fails to make distinct connections between language and meaning. Barton and Tusting (2005), however, present a compelling collection of essays in their book *Beyond Communities of Practice: Language, Power, and Social Context*, assisted by researchers in language, literacy, discourse and power that extend the communities of practice theory further. Their

purpose was to uncover missed opportunities where language was key to the meanings that were created.

Any theory of learning based on social practice must, inevitably, involve ways in which meanings are invented and subtly transformed in interactions between teachers in co-ordinated activities in a shared social and material world; and since language and meaning are fundamental to human activity, learning, thinking, and knowing can occur only within a world which is socially and culturally structured through language. (Lea, 2005)

Considering that the Collaborative's activities primarily resided in talk, my focus on language and discourse and the contribution it lends to the theoretical framework for my study, assisted in filling in these gaps.

The aforementioned theories and concepts, which emerge from a sociocultural perspective, laid the groundwork for my investigation of teachers' understandings of writing and the ways in which they enacted their identities as writers and teachers of writing within the Writing Collaborative. Although the theories and subsequent research studies presented in this literature review provided a robust framework for this study, minimal research has been conducted regarding the issues of secondary English teachers' identities as writers and the ways in which participation in a writing community and its practices support identity work. Given that social participation as a process of learning characterizes communities of practice, I was curious how English teachers, those who typically bear the most responsibility for teaching writing, would interact and participate in an environment in which they were the focus of the learning. As I analyzed and interpreted the data, I was most interested in how teachers defined writers and the collective meanings they made about writing and writers and how they positioned

themselves in relation to the practices and meanings of the community. Through the discursive practices, I was curious as to how the teachers' talk might function to answer these wonderings: Why did some teachers not identify themselves as a writer, yet talked about all the occasions for which they wrote? Why were some teachers hesitant, fearful even, to share their writing with others? What connections, if any, did teachers make between their identities as writers and their writing instruction? The Writing Collaborative provided an opportune space for these explorations to occur.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Whereas the great advance of the mirror was reflection, and the great advance of the window was transparent access, the lantern's great contribution is illumination.

(Shank, 2006, p. 13)

I feel it important to outline my philosophical orientation, including the epistemological beliefs that assisted me in structuring the framework for my study (Merriam, 1998). As with all research, the philosophical orientation, often called a *worldview* or *paradigm*, sets the foundation for the overall design, serving to shape and guide the inquiry, methodology, and research process (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Schram, 2006). Therefore, a researcher's knowledge claim provides a set of assumptions that the researcher brings to a study (Creswell, 2003; Mertens, 1998).

As a researcher, I situated my research interests within a social constructivist paradigm. As such, I accept that there are multiple views from which to see the world, stemming from one's own experiences that are socially constructed and situated (Mertens, 1998). According to Creswell (2003), a socially constructed knowledge claim consists of assumptions that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (p. 8). In other words, individuals construct reality as they interact in the social world (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2003) pointed out further that the goal of research within this worldview is to represent as much as possible the individual's views

of the situation under study. In qualitative research, the meanings individuals create are best studied and interpreted through social interactions and a focus on the specific contexts in which they occur (Creswell, 2003). Schram (2006) described, in detail, the interpretive lens:

As an interpretivist researcher, your aim is to understand this complex and constructed reality from the point of view of those who live in it. Necessarily, then, you are focused on particular people, in particular places, at particular times – situating people’s meanings and constructs within and amid specific social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and other contextual factors. (p.45)

It was through direct engagement with the teachers that such realities were brought into view, helping me to understand their experiences in the Writing Collaborative.

Research Goals

To substantiate my interest in the *communities of practice* framework, I reflected upon my personal, practical, and intellectual goals for conducting this study (Maxwell, 2005). Personally, my motivation for exploring teachers’ identities as writers stemmed from my classroom experiences as a teacher of writing, my literacy work with teachers, and my endeavors as a writer. Practically, I wanted to assist in the improvement of our students’ writing performance, but also help students see the value of writing in their everyday lives. Intellectually, I wanted to understand, as a teacher, what it meant to see oneself as a writer and the implications this awareness has on writing instruction, but also how to foster these identities in the colleagues with whom I work. It was through these beliefs, goals, and ideas that I approached the research design for this study.

Research Design

Why Qualitative Research?

Understanding the ways in which secondary English teachers positioned themselves and were positioned by others as writers required a design approach that garnered insights into the teachers' experiences and meanings created within a specific context like the Writing Collaborative (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, to address the study's research questions, I utilized a qualitative approach in which the researcher collects, analyzes, and interprets data in order to "understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (p. 11). The decision to utilize a qualitative approach was a purposeful, advantageous one, providing a better means for examining the teachers' experiences and meanings created within the natural context of the phenomenon (Schram, 2006). Subsequently, a qualitative approach to this study provided opportunities: (a) to understand a phenomenon for which minimal research has been conducted, (b) to rely on the varied and multiple meanings of the teachers' experiences, uncovering the complexity of views, and (c) to explore the processes and interactions of the phenomenon with little disruption to the natural setting (Creswell, 2003). As addressed in the introduction and theoretical sections of chapter two, issues of writing and teacher identity are complex in their own right and are recently debated and explored in scholarly research. Therefore, a qualitative approach to this study provided a more comprehensive picture of teachers' experiences in a Writing Collaborative and the ways in which they positioned themselves as writers.

Case Study Approach

The design for this qualitative research was a case study (Merriam, 1998). I chose case study because its major strength is its ability to examine a case in depth within an authentic setting (Yin, 2006). Moreover, a case study design is interested in “process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Case study is also delimiting, bound by a single unit. The contexts in which this study was bounded included the Writing Collaborative and its activities, the teachers’ area of licensure and teaching assignment, and the teachers’ experiences with writing. It was within these contexts that I was able to explore teachers’ experiences with writing and how they enacted writer identities.

My interpretations of the ways in which English teachers positioned themselves as writers through involvement in a Writing Collaborative was well suited for an interpretive case study investigation. The major purpose of an interpretive inquiry is to investigate categories of meaning created by teachers and understand how a specific context influences their behaviors and actions (Schram, 2006). “As an interpretivist researcher, your aim is to understand this complex and constructed reality from the point of view of those who live in it” (p. 44). My focus was on particular people, secondary English teachers; in particular places, a Writing Collaborative; at particular times, during one semester. In order to construct an interpretation of the multiple meanings and voices represented in this specific social context, it was necessary for me to have direct interaction with the teachers, their perspectives and their behavior (Schram, 2006). As a participant observer in this study I was able to interact with the teachers and engage in the

Writing Collaborative, allowing me to make sense of the meanings they made of their experiences.

Data collection for case study designs typically includes interviews, observations, and documents (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994, 2006). For this study, I collected data from audiotaped pre and post interviews, videotaped observations of the Writing Collaborative sessions, and writing artifacts produced by teachers during the study. Unlike other research methods, the case study generally requires the researcher to conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2006). Therefore, I began data analysis upon conducting the first interviews with teachers. The raw coding allowed me to formulate emerging ideas and potential themes as I coded and analyzed subsequent data during the study. This process was recursive, requiring me to constantly revisit data and refine my analysis.

The rationale for selecting this design was that the nature of teachers' identities as writers and the ways in which they negotiate these identities are complex; therefore, the case study design enabled me to get a realistic impression of the setting and experiences of the teachers.

Discourse Analysis of Talk

Language and discourse were central to understanding the learning that took place in the Writing Collaborative. They also illuminated the normative practices of the Writing Collaborative and the writer identities that emerged. As discussed in chapter two, Wenger's communities of practice model overlooks issues of language and discourse (Barton & Tusting, 2005). However, it was important to examine the talk that

took place during the Writing Collaborative sessions because it was primarily through talk that the members of the Collaborative performed and revised their writer identities. This microanalysis of the data provided further insight into the ways in which the teachers negotiated identities as writers within the Writing Collaborative. Typically, research on teacher learning communities has depended on interviews, surveys, and narrative accounts from field observations (Little, 2002). However, a more fine-grained analysis was needed in order to examine the practices and talk that occurred within the Writing Collaborative. Although the study design I present provided for multiple data sources, it was in the recordings of naturally occurring interactions and events among the Writing Collaborative teachers that I situated most of my theorizing of communities of practice and negotiation of writer identities. While these data certainly did not stand alone, they did serve to embody the enacted practices of the community, thus illuminating the identity work that took place.

Drawing from sociocultural discourse analysis (Mercer, 2000), I examined “stretches of talk” (Fairbanks & LaGrone, 2006) from the video recordings of the Writing Collaborative sessions. Mercer’s typology of *disputational*, *cumulative*, and *exploratory talk* served as a “useful frame of reference for making sense of the variety of talk” (Mercer, 2004, p. 146) in relation to my research questions. In order to isolate useful episodes, I looked primarily for instances of cumulative and exploratory talk (words, phrases, sentences, or extended dialogue) that would assist me in uncovering the meanings teachers made about writing and themselves about writers. Looking closely at these “episodes of talk” (p.142) had strategic value by allowing me to start with small

fragments as “a way of coping with the sheer density of talk and gesture” (Little, 2002, p. 920) found in the transcriptions of observations. Understandably, one significant concern is the large data sets that accumulate in transcribing recorded talk, forcing the researcher to select representative data. Therefore, I was conscious to select the most salient data that best represented the themes and categories that emerged.

Ultimately, sociocultural discourse analysis was used to assess the quality of the interactions among the teachers in the collaborative and any changes that occurred over time, helping me to understand how teachers take up the practices of the collaborative, share knowledge, make meaning, and negotiate identities as writers. I explain in the data analysis section of this chapter the ways in which I used this approach to assist me in answering my research questions.

I also drew from the concept of discursive positioning to analyze the talk that occurred in the Writing Collaborative, serving to reveal enacted identities. Recognizing the lack of attention to discourse in Wenger’s model, Linehan and McCarthy (2000) argued that what is needed to examine participation in social activity is a “dialogue between individual selves and communities of practice as our starting point, in recognition of the unity and polyphony of interaction in the classroom” (p. 439). They advocated a focus on discourse as a way to examine how individuals relate themselves to their surroundings. Positioning, they argue, is a useful tool when examining particular practices in a community of practice because it characterizes the “shifting responsibilities and interactive involvements” (p. 441) of its members and highlights “the manner in which individuals’ positionings are mutually emergent from particular discursive spaces”

(p. 449). In noting instances of positioning, I identified segments of discourse in which teachers would bid for recognition, hold the floor of a conversation, or revoice the utterances of others. These assessments allowed me to determine the ways in which teachers positioned themselves as writers or were positioned by others as writers.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which secondary English teachers negotiated meanings of writing and themselves as writers through engagement in a Writing Collaborative. The study explored the following questions:

How do secondary English teachers' identities as writers shape and how are they shaped by the community of the *Writing Collaborative*?

- a. What practices provide coherence to the Writing Collaborative?
- b. What meanings do teachers make about writers, writing and themselves as writers within the Writing Collaborative?

Research Site and Teachers

The Writing Collaborative, composed of secondary English teachers, was situated in a rural school district in the Piedmont area of North Carolina. The Starmount County Schools (pseudonym) district consisted of twenty-six schools: sixteen elementary, four middle, four high, one early college, and one alternative school. Demographically, the district housed approximately 14,450 students in which 63.5% were White, 20.8% Black, 9.9% Hispanic, .5% Asian, .3% American Indian, and 4.9% Multi-racial. Nearly 60 % of the students received free or reduced lunch. At the time of the study, 1,042

licensed, full-time teachers, 149 of which were National Board Certified, taught in the district. Each middle school had an average of nine Language Arts teachers while each high school had an average of six English teachers, although the early college and alternative school employed two and one, respectively.

Traditionally, the students in Starmount County Schools had not performed well on the North Carolina 7th and 10th Grade Writing Assessments, which were dissolved in 2011 due to curriculum and assessment changes in the state. Prior to that time, scores had remained low, with 65.8% or less of Starmount's students scoring at proficiency or above (L. R. Johnson, personal communication, November 24, 2011). Despite these poor statistics, writing, a brief implementation of "writing across the curriculum" and the NC State Writing Training for grades 4, 7, and 10 notwithstanding, continued to receive little attention within the district in terms of addressing teachers' instructional practices and professional growth.

Starmount County School district was selected as the setting for this study because I had twenty-four years of experience in the district as an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, an ELA Lead Teacher K-12, and, at the time of the study, an Instructional Coach at one of the high schools in which literacy instructional support was a focus. During my career in the district, I provided state writing training and professional development on literacy for middle and high school teachers. Furthermore, I participated in the development of the district's secondary writing curriculum and created a writing program for low performing seventh grade students. While my selection of the research site was a convenient one, my primary purpose for selecting Starmount County Schools

stemmed from my sincere and passionate interest in writing and the ways in which my research could support professional development in writing for English teachers in the district.

The Collaborative Space

For this case study, a Writing Collaborative served as the bounded system (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998) in which I explored the ways in which secondary English teachers' positioned themselves as writers. Using the National Writing Project and its premise as a model, I constructed an environment where English teachers were encouraged to explore themselves as writers. Unlike traditional professional development opportunities for teachers, the Writing Collaborative focused on engaging the teachers as authentic learners in their own development as writers (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). In doing so, the emphasis remained on the cultivation of their writing practices rather than their teaching of writing. Specifically, I maintained two goals for the work of the Collaborative. First, I wanted teachers, through their own writing, to experience "the secret excitement of discovery: the word, the line, the sentence, the page that achieves its own life and its own meaning" (Murray, 2004, p. 8). Second, I wanted to "provide opportunities for teachers to commit themselves, in small and large ways, to topics that are of interest to them or that arise out of their work" (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p. 4). Therefore, I designed a structural overview of the collaborative sessions and a vision for the Writing Collaborative with the intention of building "meaningful forms of membership and empowering forms of ownership of meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 269)

by eliciting guidance and ideas from the teachers each session, helping to build an authentic community of practice (Palinscar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford, & Brown, 1998).

Establishing the collaborative. The Writing Collaborative occurred over the course of one semester, February to June 2013, in which teachers met twice a month for one and a half hours in the evenings at one of the high schools in the Starmount County Schools district. During the course of the study, teachers participated in a total of eight sessions. Each session provided opportunities for teachers to write in various genres, engage in conversations about writing, share their writing with others, and reflect on their experiences with writing.

It is important to understand the composition of the sessions because they provide context regarding the space in which the practices, negotiation of meanings, and shaping of identities occurred throughout the Writing Collaborative. While I describe an overview of the sessions here, a more detailed explanation of each session can be found in Appendix A, Writing Collaborative Sessions.

The sessions shared a similar format, containing the following practices: “Good News,” quickwrites, use of the writer’s notebook, book study discussions, and a focused writing task. While these elements provided a framework for the agendas, I took into consideration the teachers’ interests and ideas for exploring particular genres and purposes for writing. Therefore, our sessions included the exploration of various types of writing, including autobiographical, fictional, informative and explanatory, and poetic.

Typically, each session opened informally with “Good News” in which teachers were given opportunity to share personal or professional news that had occurred since the

last meeting. Afterwards, teachers responded in their writer's notebook to a generative question, quote, theme, or idea, which encouraged their explorations as writers. The book *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You* by Ralph Fletcher served as a mentor text to frame our sessions. Fletcher's book explores the nature of writing and ways to awaken the potential writer in us, focusing on the use of a writer's notebook. During each session teachers spent time discussing and writing about specific quotes or ideas from the book study. Likewise, there was a designated time for sharing writing, including self-authored texts and written selections by other authors, recognizing that the "truest inspiration comes from the poems and paragraphs of real people practicing the writing craft" (Fletcher, 1996a, p.108). A significant amount of time in the Writing Collaborative, however, was spent writing and talking about writing. Each session closed with reflections and goal setting for the next writing session.

The Teachers

For this case study I utilized purposeful sampling. Merriam (1998) declared, "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Purposeful sampling means that the researcher intentionally identifies participants who have first-hand experience with the concept or phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Furthermore, the criteria for purposeful sampling procedures should align with the purpose of the study and guide the selection of the most "information-rich" cases (Merriam, 1998, p. 62). Therefore, the potential pool of teachers that were invited to participate in the Writing Collaborative

consisted of approximately 56 secondary English teachers, grades 6-12, from four middle schools, four high schools, an early college, and an alternative school in the Starmount County Schools district. English teachers, those predominantly charged by curriculum and course guidelines to teach writing, were ideal participants for this study in that many English teachers are “expected to model writing and demonstrate their proficiency as writers, yet this is potentially problematic if they lack self-assurance and positive writing identities” (Cremin & Baker, 2010, p. 9).

In order to be eligible to participate in the study, participants had to be full-time English teachers at grades 6-12 who were currently licensed and assigned to teach, full time, a Language Arts, Communication Skills, English preparation course, or an English I, II, III, or IV academic course. Additionally, teachers had to hold either probationary or career status licensure along with appropriate credentials as outlined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Teachers who did not teach at least one of the named courses or who were not the teacher of record for such courses (ie. EC teacher in an inclusive setting), or who were retired were ineligible to participate in the study. Twenty-eight secondary teachers responded to the invitation to participate in the study. I held an information session for those who expressed interest to review the overall goals of my study as previously approved by the IRB and to answer questions teachers had about the study. At the end of this session, nine teachers committed to the study and signed consent forms.

Once teachers consented to participate in the study, they completed the Teacher as Writer Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix B), regarding their education, work

experience, prior training or coursework in writing, and current teaching assignments.

This information was used to gain an overall profile of each teacher. Due to personal or professional extenuating circumstances, two teachers had to dismiss themselves from the study once it was underway, reducing the number of participants to seven.

In the following section, I profile each of the seven teachers, three middle school English Language Arts teachers and four high school English teachers, ranging from beginning to veteran classroom teachers. Table 1 provides demographic information on each teacher.

Table 1. Teacher Demographic Information

| Teacher | Years Taught | Educational Background | Areas of Licensure / Certifications | Current Teaching Assignment | Writing Group Experience |
|----------|--------------|--|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Brian | 20 | Literature & Sculpture, B.A. | 6-12 ELA 6-8 Science AIG Certification | ELA 8th Science 6th | No |
| Don | 33 | Education Specialization English, B.S. Physical Education, B.S. Educational Leadership, M.S. | 8-12 English K-12 PE K-12 Health Drivers Education K-12 Administration | English I English II | No |
| Larissa | 4 | Commercial Art, A.A. English and Education, B. A. | 6-8 ELA 9-12 English | English II English III | No |
| Leah | 15 | Psychology, B.S; MA Masters of Education | K-6 all subjects 6-12 ELA | ELA 7th | No |
| Margaret | 40 | Vocational Education, B.A. Early Childhood, M.Ed. | English 9-12 Early Childhood Pre-K | English III English IV | No |
| Mindy | 5 | Middle Grades Education, B.A. | 6-8 ELA 6-8 SS | ELA 8th | No |

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|--------------|--------------------------|----|
| Wes | 1 | English, B.A. Teacher Education Concentration | 9-12 English | English I English III | No |
|-----|---|---|--------------|--------------------------|----|

Brian. Prior to his entrance into education, Brian spent eight years in the Navy as a translator and intelligence analyst, requiring high security clearance and technical writing. He previously attended the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California where he studied linguistics and the Korean language, ultimately securing a job with the National Security Agency as an analyst. Additionally, Brian took graduate credit hours in clinical special education and young adult literature at a local college in Massachusetts. Brian had experience working in the Upward Bound program for at-risk youth and a homebound program for physically and mentally challenged students. At the time of the study, Brian had twenty years of experience in education, fifteen of which had been spent at the middle school level teaching ELA. Currently, he taught two eighth grade ELA classes and one sixth grade science class at North Star Middle School. Brian had a diverse educational background, having earned a Bachelor degree in Literature and Sculpture and then earning a teaching license in English 6-12 in North Carolina and Massachusetts. He also earned certification in Academically Intellectually Gifted education and recently took the state's assessment requirement to earn licensure in middle grades science. Having been a teacher in Starmount County Schools for many years, Brian had participated in several local and state writing workshops. Brian confidently identified himself as a writer and unequivocally supported the idea that teachers should write in order to teach writing effectively.

Don. Don had taught English I and II at Starmount High School for slightly more than a year. In the previous year, Don had been hired as an English teacher and assistant football coach. He had thirty-three years of experience in education and had taught English at the middle and high school levels in West Virginia, Virginia, and, most recently, North Carolina. Don earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Secondary Education and a Master of Science Degree in Educational Leadership. He was certified in secondary English, Administration and Supervision, and Driver's Education. According to Don, he had no previous professional development in writing and had never been a part of a writing group. Don identified himself as someone who had the ability to write, but who was not a writer. However, he believed that teachers should know a little bit about writing in order to teach it.

Larissa. Larissa was an English teacher who had taught at West Starmount High School for four years. A non-traditional educator, Larissa had previously worked in commercial art and advertising to which she had an associate's degree. Wanting to pursue teaching, she returned to college and earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Education. During her four years she has taught English I, II, and III, including several honors classes. At the time of the study, Larissa taught English II and III only. Recently, Larissa had presented on student collaboration and writing at the district's education conference. Larissa's interest in the Writing Collaborative stemmed from her desire to join a Writer's Guild. Although Larissa did not see herself as writer at the beginning of the semester, she did humbly admit to being a writer when the Collaborative ended. She

also felt that teachers should do some level of writing in their personal and professional lives in order to instruct students on writing.

Leah. Leah had fifteen years of experience in education, having taught various grade levels K-12. She had worked at Starmount Middle School for eleven years and was currently teaching seventh grade ELA. Initially earning a Bachelor and Master of Arts Degrees in Psychology, Leah returned to college to earn an education degree. Her licensure areas included K-6 and 6-12 ELA. Although she had not participated in a writing group before, she had attended professional development aimed at writing across the curriculum. Leah did not consider herself a writer nor did she feel teachers needed to be writers in order to teach writing.

Mindy. Mindy, who had taught for five years, was in her first year at Starmount Middle School. Her current teaching assignment was eighth grade ELA, but she also had experience teaching seventh grade ELA and seventh and eighth grade social studies. Leah held a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Middle Grades Education with licensure in ELA and social studies grades 6-9. Leah indicated that she had not received professional development in writing prior to joining the Writing Collaborative. At the time of the study, Leah was in the process of applying to graduate school as well as planning her upcoming wedding. Mindy, who had always enjoyed writing, identified herself as a writer and felt that teachers should learn right along with their students, experiencing the process with them.

Margaret. Margaret was a high school English teacher who had taught at Starmount High School for five years. Currently, she taught English III and English IV.

Prior to coming to North Carolina, she had taught in several states, including Texas, Arizona, and Ohio. With forty years of teaching experience, Margaret had taught English at the middle school and high school levels. Additionally, she previously taught child development courses. Margaret had a Bachelor of Science Degree in Vocational Education, a Master of Education in Early Childhood, and licensure in Early Childhood Education Pre –K, Reading 6-8, and secondary English. Additionally, Margaret possessed an Academically Intellectually Gifted education endorsement. In her questionnaire, she noted that she had participated in several professional development sessions focused on writing, including topics such as “Teaching Students that Hate to Write,” “Teaching Gifted Students,” and “Teaching American Indians to Write,” but had never participated in a writing group. Although Margaret identified herself as a personal writer and not a professional writer, she believed that those who are responsible for teaching writing should be writers.

Wes. Wes’s participation in the Writing Collaborative was exciting for me because I had taught him English in the eighth grade. He was in his first year of teaching secondary English at Starmount High School. Wes had received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Education in 2012 from a prominent university in the state, graduating Valedictorian of his class. Wes held licensure in English (9-12) and Middle Grades ELA (6-9). At the time of the study, Wes taught English I and English III. Although he had never participated in a writing group or attended professional development for writing, Wes shared that he enjoyed his college English courses and some writings he had completed in them. Wes admitted that he had submitted several poems and short stories

to the university's literary magazine, but never received publication. Wes identified himself as a writer, and felt that teachers should have an understanding of the writing process in order to teach it.

Data Collection

In case study research, multiple forms of data insure triangulation of evidences that produce strong findings (Yin, 2006). In order to enhance the internal validity (Merriam, 1998) of this study, I used multiple sources of data. Teachers completed a questionnaire via Google forms at the onset of the study in February 2013 in order to collect demographic information such as educational background, licensure and certifications, teaching experience, career status, and subjects taught. This questionnaire was web-based and a link to the questionnaire was emailed to secondary English teachers once IRB approval was secured and consent forms were signed.

For primary data collection, I conducted pre and post face-to-face semi-structured interviews, field observations, and collected documents generated by the teachers during the study. Additionally, I maintained a researcher's notebook in which comments, reflections and questions were documented throughout the study. It was intended for data collection to be very interactive, merging data from the interviews, observations, and documents in the process of understanding and describing the Writing Collaborative and the experiences of the teachers within it (Merriam, 1998).

Interviews

"One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview" (Yin, 1994, p. 84). Interviews provide one method for collecting an insider's perspective

on the issue under study. Specifically, in-person interviews allow the researcher to gain information and insights that go beyond the actual words (Shank, 2006). In order to access and understand secondary English teachers' previous experiences with writing, their identities as writers, and the ways in which they negotiated their identities as writers within the Writing Collaborative, it was important to use interview.

Teachers participated in two individual, semi-structured interviews during the study, occurring at the beginning (February 2013) and culmination (May 2013) of the study and lasting approximately 45 minutes each. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to "access teachers' perspectives and understandings of the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74) while collecting desired information. Each interview was audiotaped, granting me multiple opportunities to review the tapes and increasing the credibility of the findings. I also used note taking during the interview to document initial reactions and thoughts to signal the importance of the teachers' comments (Merriam, 1998).

The initial interview (Appendix C) was conducted early in February 2013 prior to engagement in the Writing Collaborative. The interview protocol consisted of seven questions aimed at understanding teachers' experiences with writing, feelings about writing, and the process they used when writing. Additionally, teachers were asked whether they identified as a writer and whether teachers should be writers in order to teach writing. These questions formed a baseline and the responses, coupled with observations and the post interview, allowed me to examine the teachers' experiences and identities as writers and note any changes over the course of the study.

The post interview (Appendix D) was conducted in May 2013 after the last session of the Writing Collaborative. The interview protocol consisted of three questions, modified based on preliminary analyses, focusing on the teachers' experiences in the Writing Collaborative, changes in their sense of themselves as writers, and reflections on the study in relation to writing instruction. The purpose of the post interview was to elicit teachers' perspectives on their experiences and increase understanding of the ways in which their identities as writers were negotiated. The post interview also served as a means for determining any changes in writer identities during the course of the study.

All interviews took place in the early morning or late afternoon in a classroom or conference room at the convenience of the teachers. Audio recordings of the interviews were stored electronically and transcribed for data analysis.

Observations

Important to case study as interview, observation "can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94). The decision to conduct observations was an advantageous one in that they provided primary source data that helped me to understand the context of the study and triangulate emergent findings when used along with interviews and documents (Merriam, 1998).

As the observer in this study, my role was one of participant-observer, wherein the researcher "may assume a variety of roles within a case study situation and may actually participate in the events being studied" (Yin, 1994, p.87). As a participant-observer I deemed it important for me to engage in the Writing Collaborative not only as

a facilitator of the project but also as an authentic learner, an insider, sharing in the writing experiences with the teachers. This afforded me “the ability to perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone ‘inside’ the case study rather than external to it” (Yin, 1994, p. 88). Patton (1990) advocates a balance of insider and outsider perspectives in qualitative research.

Experiencing the program as an insider is what necessitates the participant part of the participant observation. At the same time, however, there is clearly an observer side to this process. The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the program as an insider while describing the program for outsiders. (p. 207)

Thus the mix of my participation and observation shifted during the study, allowing me to record some field notes during the Writing Collaborative; however, the bulk of the field notes were completed after the observation upon review of the transcribed videotapes.

Field observations of the Writing Collaborative were conducted twice a month, February 2013 until May 2013. The observation protocol (Appendix E) followed a format suggested by Merriam (1988) in which the time, place, and purpose of the observation and descriptions of the setting, people, and activities are included supplemented by direct quotations and observer’s comments. Using this format allowed me to focus on the teachers, their interactions, nonverbal communication, and the use of inflections during dialogue.

I videotaped each face-to-face session, lasting approximately 90 minutes. Merriam (1998) cautions the use of videotaping devices declaring that the cost and

obtrusiveness of these methods often inhibit data collection. Erickson (2004), however, argued that nuanced interactions in a social setting are best captured by audiovisual recordings “from which either detailed transcriptions of the interaction can be prepared and analyzed or careful moment-by-moment coding can be done” (p. 177). In order to have teachers feel comfortable speaking and interacting on camera, I placed the videotaping equipment on the perimeter of the room so they would not be as conscious of its presence. Also, each session I rotated the placement of the camera so I could record participants from different vantage points. I placed an omnidirectional microphone in the center of the group, allowing me to capture conversations from whole and small groups. Although teachers knew they were being videotaped, it did not appear to interfere with or influence their behaviors. On one occasion, I had to step out of the room to take an emergency phone call from my daughter. I was gone approximately ten minutes. When I returned I discovered they had continued the discussion without my presence. I perceived this event as their genuine interest in the Collaborative and desire to engage as learners. Reviewing the videotape later, it was apparent neither my presence nor the camera’s was obtrusive.

Video recordings “provide much more potential information than can be assimilated from moment to moment by a humanly limited information processor” (Erickson, 2004, p. 178). Having videotaped sessions allowed me ample opportunity to review and record accurate descriptions of the setting, teachers, and events as well as my own comments and reflections. Since the focal point of my analysis examined the “talk”

that occurred within the Writing Collaborative, videotaped sessions were a necessity when recording dialogue and conversation among teachers.

Documents

Another source of information I collected for this study were documents created by the teachers in the Writing Collaborative. The purpose of these researcher-generated documents (Merriam, 1998) was to discover more information about the nature of the Writing Collaborative, its practices, and its teachers. Furthermore, the data collected served to confirm or discount tentative findings from the interviews and observations. These documents included writing tasks completed during sessions, longer drafts of writing completed outside the Collaborative, and written reflections and comments regarding writing tasks and experiences during each session. The majority of these documents were compiled in each teacher's writer's notebook.

Researcher's Notebook

Practical data sources I also drew from for this study were analytic memos. According to Maxwell (2005), a memo "refers to any writing that a researcher does in relationship to the research other than actual field notes, transcription, or coding" (p. 12). Memos are a technique for fleshing out ideas, reacting to findings, analyzing themes, making connections to the literature, reflecting on the study, or asking critical questions (Maxwell, 2005; Schram, 2006). Memos reflect thinking in progress and allow new discoveries and relationships among ideas in a study. Therefore, I maintained a researcher's notebook to document my thoughts as data collection and analysis unfolded. Typically, I noted connections to theory and other related concepts I needed to explore,

drew charts and visuals to assist me in organizing data, outlined potential headings and subheadings for chapters for which I was struggling, and reflected on discussions from meetings with my chair. While these entries were informal, they were useful references during the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

One of the most difficult and mysterious aspects of case study is analyzing the massive amounts of data typically collected during the study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994, 2006). However, “data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (Merriam, 1998, p. 162). Therefore, to analyze the data, I used the constant-comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This method engages the researcher in a recursive process of examining and re-examining the data while comparing across data sources to generate tentative categories or themes. “The task is to compare one unit of information with the next in looking for recurring regularities in the data” (Merriam, 1998, p.180).

Prior to data analysis, I prepared each data source. All interviews were transcribed as soon as they were collected. Likewise, after each collaborative session, I viewed and transcribed each videotaped session using the observation protocol. For each document collected from the teachers, I scanned copies and stored them in an electronic file folder. This thorough preparation process allowed for deep immersion and familiarity with the data.

In order to answer my research questions effectively, I approached data analysis purposefully and methodically. While I present my data analysis methods in a step-by-

step fashion, this in no way implies that the process was linear. Throughout the process I visited the data sources repeatedly, which often resulted in additional nuanced meanings for themes that had been generated. In the proceeding sections, I explain in detail my data analysis process and reasons for my decisions. First, I explain the process for analyzing the teacher interviews. Next, I describe the process for analyzing each observation of the Writing Collaborative that provided the foundation for refining my analysis. Finally, I explain a more detailed analysis of the data that served to specifically answer my research questions.

Teacher Interviews

Although I transcribed some of the interviews, it was necessary for me to secure a transcriptionist due to the volume of audiotape and time constraints. However, I reviewed each transcript for accuracy as I listened to the audio recording of each interview. Each transcript was recorded using Microsoft Word. During the first reading of each interview, I used the review tool in Word to highlight interesting and noteworthy comments of each teacher. Using the comment feature, I made marginal notes that reflected initial thoughts, ideas, comments, questions, and summaries of the teachers' comments. Each comment box was linked to the specific data it represented, making it easier to retrieve bits of data for further analysis. In the pre interview, this initial pass of the data gave me a broad understanding of each teacher's experiences with writing, how they felt about writing, how they defined writing and writers, and how they saw themselves as writers. In the post interview, the first reading of the data provided insights into teachers' experiences in

the collaborative and any changes to how they identified as a writer and perceived changes to their instructional practices.

To examine the data further, I created Excel spreadsheets for both interviews that contained tabs for each interview question. On each question sheet, I created rows representing each teacher. I then cut and pasted each teacher's response into a cell for each interview question. Once the data were reorganized into the spreadsheets, I created column space to document emergent codes and analytic notes for each teacher per interview question. The individual codes were color-coded and corresponded to bits of data in the teacher's response. This process allowed me to conduct cross data analysis. In other words, I was able to look across each teacher's data individually and the codes that emerged, but I was also able to look at responses to each question collectively, noting similarities and differences in how the teachers responded to each question. The coded data from each teacher's pre and post interview were compared to the videotaped observation data from all eight sessions and data collected from documents. In doing so, I was able to track teachers' participation and meanings in the collaborative over time.

Matrix of Teachers Over Time

To track teachers during the course of the Collaborative, I created a matrix to document teachers' participation in the Writing Collaborative and any changes in their perspectives about writing and themselves as writers. Using Excel, I created separate sheets for each teacher. Each sheet contained columns for documenting observations that best reflected the teacher's participation in each collaborative session and coded data from the pre and post interviews. After transcribing and coding each Writing

Collaborative observation, I reviewed the data, noting each teacher's engagement. In the matrix, I documented comments, behaviors, and insights I deemed important about each teacher for that specific session. The matrix provided summary data that allowed me to look across collaborative sessions and note any changes in their participation and perceptions of themselves as writers. These data were helpful in determining the practices and meanings teachers made about writing and the writer identities they enacted in the Collaborative. Data from this matrix contributed to the presentation of the teachers' writer identities presented in Chapter Six.

Writing Collaborative Observations

As a participant-observer in this study, it was challenging to take field notes during the Writing Collaborative sessions. While I was able to document a few notes, however, the bulk of the field notes were documented after the session was completed. I reviewed and transcribed the videotape of each session using the observation protocol. To aid me in this process, I utilized transcription software and a transcription pedal. As I viewed each videotape, I described the agenda and overall tasks of the writing session. I divided the observation into segments that corresponded to the tasks and agenda items for each session. This allowed me to capture the interactions and events in shorter time frames. For each segment, I described what teachers were doing and what teachers were saying. Because I was most interested in the teachers' discursive practices, I paid particular attention to the "talk" among the teachers, transcribing conversations verbatim. Also, I made observer's comments for each segment that included summaries of the events and my initial thoughts and ideas as to what was taking place in each segment.

Once a video had been transcribed, I read through the transcript highlighting interesting and relevant bits of data (Merriam, 1998). Keeping in mind Merriam's notion of "having a conversation with the data" (p.181), as I read the transcript I made extended notes, comments and observations regarding specific incidents, teachers' remarks and behaviors. To begin coding, I looked for instances of exploratory and cumulative talk throughout the session. This approach helped me identify where identity work seemed to occur. Within these instances of talk, I created codes that depicted their nature and purpose. For example, "sharing personal stories," "knowledge sharing," "classroom connections," "using humor," "writing challenges," or "asking questions" were some of the codes that emerged during this process. I grouped codes together that seemed related through the use of color-coding.

To provide additional insights into how and when identity work seemed to be taking place, I identified segments of discourse in which teachers positioned themselves (reflexive positioning) or were positioned by others (interactive) as writers or teachers of writing. I also coded the means by which teachers positioned themselves or were positioned by others through bids for recognition, holding the floor, and revoicing.

As I transcribed and coded subsequent Writing Collaborative sessions using the same techniques, I kept list of codes and groupings in mind, looking for any patterns in the data. Consequently, I compared and merged lists of codes derived from the data of each session, serving to create representative, yet tentative themes. In order to address each of my research questions directly, however, I refined my analysis. In the proceeding

sections I describe this process which also reflects the presentation of data in chapters four, five, and six.

Determining Practices That Build Community

To answer my research question about the practices that provide coherence to the Writing Collaborative, I returned to the categories that emerged from the observation data. Specifically, I looked for coded activities and talk that served to “sustain mutual engagement in action” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). This review of the data revealed “sharing” as a primary practice of the Writing Collaborative. To refine my analysis, I reorganized the data and created charts, what I refer to as “Sharing Practices of the Writing Collaborative” from this point forward, for each session with these questions as column headers: (a) Who shares?, (b) What do teachers share?, (c) How do teachers share? (self-initiated, by invitation, or volunteered by others), (d) Who responds and how?, (e) What is the context in which the sharing occurs (transcription of talk)?, and (e) What meanings does the sharer make? Once the data had been reorganized into the chart, I coded each instance of sharing, which revealed the ways in which teachers responded to others when sharing occurred. The codes for *responding* to sharing included, for example, “repeats an idea,” “compliments others’ work,” “makes humorous comments,” “comments on specific writing style,” “makes instructional connections,” “provides background knowledge,” or “narrates a personal story.” I categorized these codes, which led to the development of another chart (Appendix F) with defined categories, the session occurrence, types of share practices within that category, and data samples that supported them. Finally, I organized the share practice themes by Wenger’s “three dimensions of

the relation by which practice is the source of coherence of a community” (p. 72):

mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and share repertoire. These themes included: (a) interject humor, (b) praise and encourage, (c) support and affirm, (d) ask questions, (e) explore ideas, (f) share knowledge and beliefs, and (g) narrate stories. The themes had subthemes, and I developed descriptors for each one based on representative data. Table 2 summarizes the practice of sharing in the Writing Collaborative.

Table 2. Summary of the Share Practice of the Writing Collaborative

| | Share Practice | Types | Practice Descriptors |
|-------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Mutual Engagement | Interject Humor | <i>Self-deprecation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belittling one's own writing, writing process or ideas • Keeping others' expectations of oneself in check • Admitting one's shortcomings |
| | | <i>Good-natured ridicule</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mocking others, their ideas or comments in jest • Poking fun at a topic or issue under discussion • Making light of everyday experiences |
| | | <i>Put others at ease</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easing a tense or awkward situation |
| | Praise and Encourage | <i>Successes and Accomplishments</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing others' talents inside and outside the collaborative • Applauding others' personal and professional accomplishments |
| | | <i>Writing, Styles or Techniques</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complimenting a writer's specific style and lines of text • Admiring a writer's use of literary techniques / elements • Encouraging the writer to pursue a writing idea |
| Joint Enterprise | Support/Affirm | <i>Agree with or affirm others' comments</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate agreement with others' comments • Affirm and support knowledge/ideas of others • Admit to similar practices |
| | Ask Questions | <i>Details / clarification</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain better understanding • Clarify articulated thoughts • Secure more information |
| | | <i>Self-affirmation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm one's own beliefs • Relieve self-doubt |
| | | <i>Propose opposing thoughts</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question others in order to consider opposing ideas |
| | Explore Ideas | <i>Recognize or Present new ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize new ideas presented by others • Present new ideas to the community |
| | | <i>Recognize or Present opposing ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize opposing ideas presented by others • Present opposing ideas to the community |
| | | <i>Clarify Ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate others' ideas by revoicing • Restate ones' own ideas in a different way |

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Shared Repertoire | | <i>Name Ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put a name to or categorize others' ideas |
| | | <i>Extend Ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend one's own ideas or ideas of others by elaborating, providing more detail or examples |
| | Share Knowledge and Beliefs | <i>Topic specific</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute facts, information, or thoughts about a topic being discussed |
| | | <i>Writing and Writers</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share one's beliefs about writing Share knowledge about the writing process Share advice about writing styles and techniques Share writing resources |
| | Narrate Stories | <i>Personal Storytelling</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relate to or confirm others' ideas by sharing a personal experience Sharing personal stories to exemplify a concept or topic being discussed Sharing personal and classroom connections |

Uncovering Meanings Teachers Made About Writing and Writers

To answer my question about the meanings teachers made about writers, writing and themselves as writers within the Writing Collaborative, I returned to the “Share Practices of the Writing Collaborative” chart because it is within the practices of the community that meanings are constructed. “Our engagement in practice may have patterns, but it is the production of such patterns anew that gives rise to an experience of meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 52).

To begin, I read and reread the data from the “Share Practices of the Writing Collaborative” chart. During these readings, I focused my attention on the meanings that were constructed when the practice of sharing took place. For each instance of sharing, I examined the transcript associated with it and made notes in a column to the right, headed “Meanings,” that illustrated its content, interesting phrases, and relevant ideas related to writers and writing. Example codes included, “writers need models,” “reading impacts writing,” “writing helps to recall memories,” “talk generates ideas for writing,” writing is personal,” or “students need to see authentic writing.” Next, I grouped these notes into

categories that best represented the meanings. In order to refine the categories further, I created a chart with the potential categories as headers and cut and pasted data that reflected each of them. This process allowed me to see where categories of data could be subsumed. Therefore, I collapsed and merged categories, excluding irrelevant data in the process. The revised chart (Appendix G) contained the categories of meanings teachers made about writers and writing supported with data samples. The themes included: (a) definitions of writers, (b) purposes of writing, (c) writing ideas, (d) writing as a process, and (e) personal aspects of writing. Finally, I organized the categories of meanings by creating descriptors for each based on the representative data. Table 3 summarizes the collective meanings teachers made about writers and writing.

Table 3. Summary of Teachers' Collective Meanings of Writers and Writing

| Categories of Meanings | Descriptions of Meanings |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Definitions of Writers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writers are observers, reporters, researchers, artists, and communicators • Writers are accurate, concise, spontaneous, observant, creative, imaginative, empathetic, reflective, and visual |
| Purposes of Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create understanding; document thinking to elicit new ideas • To explore a personal topic of interest • To document current or past events • To recall information, memories • For therapeutic purposes; to heal |
| Writing Ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generated by current and past events, memories, and personal stories • Motivated by talk • Influenced by reading: vocabulary, ideas & opinions |
| Writing as a Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing process (style, technique, organization) varies among writers • Number of drafts varies among writers • Writer's block is authentic • Writers emulate others; use models • Sharing writing and providing feedback, although uncomfortable, supports writers |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Personal Aspects of Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is personally engaging; but requires honesty • Writers relinquish control once their writing is made public • Writing exposes and represents the self |
|------------------------------------|---|

Discovering Meanings Teachers Made About Teachers of Writing and Writing Instruction

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers as writers. However, conversations about writing instruction naturally surfaced during the study. Although these conversations were minimal and only a few teachers engaged in such conversations, I feel it important to include these meanings because they contributed to some of the writer identities teachers enacted in practice. During data analysis I coded and charted meanings teachers made about teachers of writing and instructional practices, using the same data analysis process as described previously for uncovering meanings of writers and writing. Table 4 summarizes the meanings teachers made about writing instruction.

Table 4. Summary of Teachers' Collective Meanings of Writing Instruction

| Categories of Meanings | Descriptions of Meanings |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Writing Models | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers need to write alongside their students • Mentor texts serve as writing models • Students need to see and hear authentic writers in action |
| Reasons for Teaching Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers come to understand their students better through writing • Writing engages reluctant learners, particularly those who are less verbal • Writing allows students to express themselves |
| Student Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' writing needs to be fostered and supported through consistent feedback • Writing feedback should begin and end with a positive comment • Feedback on students' writing should be meaningful and purposeful |
| Instructional Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk generates ideas for writing • Imagery and sensory activities engage students in writing • Students tend to be more engaged when writing is personal and expressive • Engaging students in high interest texts serves as starting points for their own writing |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for authentic writing tasks • Use of graphic organizers helps struggling writers |
|--|---|

Identities in Practice

To answer my overall question about the ways in which teachers positioned themselves as writers within a Writing Collaborative, I reviewed all data sources. Particularly, I reviewed the interviews of each teacher, marking instances where they authored themselves as writers or non-writers, and in some cases as teachers of writing. Because identities are “lived in and through activity” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5), I returned to the observational fields notes where I had marked instances of positioning, making note of the writer identities teachers enacted. I also revisited the “Share Practices of the Writing Collaborative” chart. Within this chart I reviewed each teacher’s instances of sharing and the meanings she made and grouped these meanings into three themes: teacher as writer, teacher of writing, and writing topics. Next, I created a chart where I listed the teacher as writer meanings and the teacher of writing meanings for each teacher by session. This organization allowed me to look across the cumulative meanings each teacher made through the share practices, allowing me to further isolate areas where she was fashioning writer identities. Wenger (1998) noted, “Through the negotiation of meaning, it is the interplay of participation and reification that makes people and things what they are” (p.70). While the different writer identities teachers enacted are evident in chapter 4 where I present the findings on the share practices and chapter five where I present the findings of the meanings teachers made, I have profiled in Table 5 the writer

identities of each teacher and descriptors that illustrate them. These identities are presented in greater detail in chapter six.

Table 5. Profile of Teachers' Writer Identities

| Teacher | Writer Identities | Descriptors |
|---------|--------------------------|---|
| Brian | Documenter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> has written in a "nothing book" for over 30 years "I kinda feel like it's my calling to observe and report, and some people don't like to report; they don't want to hear about the truth." |
| | Songwriter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "You know, those are song lyrics going all the way back to 1970 something that I've written over the years and that's another thing that I do a lot of is song writing" wrote and performed "Wave to the Caboose" |
| | Author | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> working on an illustrated book titled "The Water Tower" has published his own e-books |
| | Word Man | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Now, there's a word, <i>asphalt</i>. Think about it...who coined that one?" Margaret called Brian the "word man" "And I really love 'out there' vocabulary!" |
| | Teacher as Writing Model | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> writes alongside his students "Ok, I've done this to my students before. I am going to suffer as I have made them suffer. I never ask of them something I haven't done myself." |
| Don | Functional Writer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> distinguished between being a writer and having the ability to write "That's one thing that you have to do if you lived at my house, write a thank you note." |
| | Creative Writing Teacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> students compile a creative writing portfolio "One of the things I do for creative writing is I make my kids put their heads down and get it as quiet as I can and they think about the happiest time in their life. Then I'd ask them 'what do you hear, what do you see, what do you smell, what do you taste, and what do you feel?'" |
| Larissa | Creative Writer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I think I have inner feelings that I've inhibited that I don't release until my creative juices start flowing..." "No, they see me more as an artist though, and I think that creativity regardless if it's writing or painting all flow from the same area." created a detailed and creative heart map |
| Leah | Reader-writer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> believed if one is a good reader then one can teach writing "If there's a writer or anybody coming to Barnes & Noble or here or anywhere, I stalk them." |
| | List Maker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I do song lists. Places I need to be lists. I mean, I am a habitual list maker because...and they're everywhere!" |

| | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Margaret | Private Writer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes daily in a journal • “I write to heal.” • “And I don’t like exposing myself, baring my soul.” |
| | Traditional Teacher of Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing instruction focused on correctness, structure and written product • “I always did like Canterbury Tales or Beowulf that always rhymes, and I’ve never done free poems until this year. We did Tupac.” |
| Mindy | Planner | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shared planning techniques, including lists, outlines and organizers • “I just jot down....I may not use any of them, but I have to like brainstorm.” |
| | Student-centered Teacher of Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • believed writing should be taught as a separate course • “Some of my quietest students have the best pieces of writing. They don’t mind sharing what they think through their writing, but they just don’t verbalize it.” |
| Wes | Writer’s Block | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “As a writer in general, at some point or other you hit a block...that wall where you go. I’ve gotten out this much now where’s the rest of it?” • used freewriting to counteract writer’s block |
| | Free Writer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quickwrites provided another writer’s block strategy • believes freewriting |
| | Poet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “And as far as the poetry goes, um, I like expressing myself that way. I like kind of, I do usually try and work with more structured poems rather than like free verse or free form.” • wrote “Whites,” a poem about his experiences with laundry |

Trustworthiness

The primary assumption in qualitative research is the view that reality is constructed through the social interactions of individuals (Merriam, 1998; Schram, 2006). As a qualitative researcher, my goal was to interpret the experiences of the teachers. As the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, all data were filtered through the researcher’s own reasoning which is situated in a specific cultural and historical moment (Creswell, 2003). As such, I realized that as the researcher I operated from a particular point of view, and understood the possibility of other interpretations and understandings of the phenomenon under study (Schram, 2006). As a result, it was important for my

research to be carried out in the most trustworthy manner. No research is without concern for producing valid and reliable results (Merriam, 1998), and in most qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005), issues of trustworthiness pose threats to the study.

Trustworthiness “is simply the degree to which we can depend on and trust given research findings” (Shank, 2006, p. 115). Shank argued that trust in a qualitative study must be built up and nurtured so as to maintain the integrity of the study.

To ensure accuracy of the findings, I used five strategies suggested in the literature on qualitative research (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Shank, 2006; Yin, 1994).

Triangulation

In qualitative research it is important for the researcher to demonstrate that the data reported and interpretations made are indeed accurate (Eisenhart, 2006).

Triangulation of the data is “a process of converging upon a particular finding by using different sorts of data and data-gathering strategies” (Shank, 2006, 113).

Data were triangulated using several sources including demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes, and documents generated by teachers. Furthermore, I used my researcher’s notebook to further corroborate or discount specific findings or patterns in the data. Although qualitative data from the interviews and written documents were vulnerable to self-report bias, triangulation reduced this risk and allowed a better assessment of the explanations and conclusions I drew (Maxwell, 2005). The use of data collection strategies such as

audiotaped interviews, videotaped Writing Collaborative sessions, and extensive observation and analytic notes served only to strengthen the study's findings.

Member Checking

Member checking involves consistently and systematically acquiring feedback about the data and tentative interpretations from the participants (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). In a qualitative study it is important "to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening" (Merriam, 1998, p. 203). Therefore, I involved teachers in determining the accuracy of data (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Maxwell, 2005) during the study through informal follow-up conversations that allowed me to share my analysis and acquire feedback from them.

Rich, Thick Description

In qualitative research, rich, thick description (Patton, 2002) provides the foundation for analysis and reporting, supporting the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2003). Rich data provide detailed descriptions of the setting, teachers, and events that allow the reader to share in the experiences, helping to determine their transferability (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Such description can be accomplished through transcription of interviews and detailed note taking or videotaping of observations. To generate "rich, thick description," all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Likewise, I created detailed notes from videotaped Writing Collaborative sessions. Much of this description was utilized to support an informative and interesting narrative of the study.

Peer Debriefing

To enhance the accuracy of my account of the data, I debriefed data and emergent findings with my committee chair who offered her insights and interpretations (Creswell, 2003). Along with my committee chair, I had a fellow graduate student who served as a critical friend to discuss my research and offer insights. He was currently writing his dissertation as well, so we met and called one another frequently to discuss our data and findings. We also exchanged drafts of chapters to read and provided one another feedback.

Limitations

In interpretive research such as a case study, it is vitally important for the researcher to disclose any biases, values, or personal interests related to her research (Creswell, 2003) and to maintain the integrity of the study (Schram, 2006). This self-reflection, called reflexivity, acknowledges that the personal and researcher self are intertwined. “Understanding how a particular researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study” (Maxwell, 2005) are of primary concern. Therefore, I must address how I approached this study.

I approached this study with previous experience as an English teacher for twenty-one years in the district where the research took place; three years as an instructional/curriculum coach for one of the participating high schools; a professional development coordinator for the district with a focus on writing instruction; and an educational background in adolescent literacy, specifically reading education. My interest in conducting this study stemmed from my own experiences with teaching writing,

working with English teachers in my current role as an instructional coach, and developing my own skills as a writer. While I did harbor positive attitudes toward writing and the teaching of writing, I was concerned about teachers' identities as writers, their meaningful participation in an environment such as the Writing Collaborative, and possible instructional outcomes. These concerns drove my research. It is my hope that teachers as well as school leaders can use this information to develop a better understanding of writing and teachers' identities as writers and how these identities may influence not only instructional practices, but students' identities as writers as well.

To establish and maintain a study's integrity, researchers must consider their presence in a setting (Schram, 2006). Teachers in the study may have felt intimidated by my presence, a teacher within the school district who specialized in literacy instruction, has led professional development in writing, and worked with several teachers in the study. Therefore, my presence had the potential to influence how teachers talked or behaved. For example, some teachers might have been reluctant to share honest opinions, whereas others may have felt a need to contribute ideas I wanted to hear. This was minimized, however, through long-term involvement at the research site. Since the investigation occurred over a period of four months (February – May), this gave me ample time to establish a trust-worthy relationship with the teachers. Additionally, my work in the district and prior relationship with the participants served to strengthen this trust. Furthermore, my role as a participant-observer posed a risk to the study and the dual responsibility as a researcher to engage with teachers while remaining loyal to the goals of my research (Schram, 2006). During the study I facilitated the activities of the

collaborative as well as engaged in them as a participant to the extent that data collection was as unobtrusive as possible. At the onset of the study, it was made clear to teachers that my role as a researcher would be balanced with my engagement as a participant-observer in the Writing Collaborative. Therefore, the tools and resources for documenting field notes were conspicuous to teachers. Although it was not feasible to take detailed notes during each session, I was able to make some notes in the margins of the agenda for each session. These were later used during data analysis. I was forthright in explaining that during the sessions, I would move in and out of these roles as necessary. With that said, I remained conscious to how I was being perceived as I shifted roles so as not to have my intentions misrepresented. During informal conversations at the end of each session, we often discussed the events that transpired and the meanings we thought they held. This transparency about my role, referred to as posturing (Schram, 2006), assisted in establishing a positive rapport with teachers, increasing the trustworthiness of the study.

The time under which this study was conducted is another limitation. This study spanned four months and included eight Writing Collaborative sessions for teachers. In order to gain deeper insights about the ways teachers come to see themselves as writers in a community of practice and the implications for writing instruction, the study would have benefitted from a longer time-frame of participation. Long-term involvement in the research not only provides more data, but more importantly, it allows for more direct data that is less dependent on interpretation (Maxwell, 2005).

Another limitation is the study sample. The participants in this study were limited to three middle school ELA teachers and four high school English teachers. As such, findings from this study may not generalize to larger populations and other settings.

In this chapter I discussed case study methodology and its appropriateness for my research and the specific methods I used for collecting and analyzing data from the Writing Collaborative. In the following chapters I present these data in a way that best illustrates the evolution of the Writing Collaborative and the ways in which teachers fashioned themselves as writers. In chapter four, I present data on the primary practices that supported teachers' engagement and construction of the community. In chapter five I discuss the meanings teachers negotiated about writers and writing in concert with their engagement in the share practices. Finally, in chapter six I present the writer identities of the teachers that shaped or were shaped by the community of practice.

CHAPTER IV

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS

Making and living our identities involves actions and process, occurs in real time and depends on our connections with others, on what we do and say, and how we feel about it.

(Danielewicz, 2001, p.35)

This study explored the ways in which secondary English teachers came to see themselves as writers through engagement in the Writing Collaborative. Specifically, I was interested in how participation in the Writing Collaborative would shape teachers' identities as writers and, in turn, how the writing identities they brought to the collaborative would serve to shape the community. Communities are shaped and determined by the practices in which teachers engage; likewise, these practices form and shape the identities of the teachers (Horne, 2012). Because the Writing Collaborative was a new community, one that did not already exist, it was important to investigate how the Collaborative was built and what characterized the community as a whole. Central to the ways in which teachers positioned themselves or were positioned by others as writers and teachers of writing was the formation of the writing community and the practices that came to characterize it. The development of these practices, exhibited through sharing and the teachers' responses to sharing, facilitated meaningful participation, establishing evolving practices that indexed membership in the community. The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which secondary English teachers negotiate meanings of

writing and themselves as writers through engagement in a Writing Collaborative.

Necessarily, I addressed the following question and sub-questions:

How do secondary English teachers' identities shape and how are they shaped by the community of the Writing Collaborative?

- a. What practices provide coherence to the Writing Collaborative?
- b. What meanings do teachers make about writers, writing and themselves as writers within the Writing Collaborative?

Because the formation and stability of the community resided in great part in its practices, the purpose of this chapter is to address the first sub-question that sought to identify the practices that provided coherence to the community. Coherence in a community of practice is generated through essential characteristics of *mutual engagement*, *shared repertoire* and *joint enterprise* and provides balance that potentially binds community members (Wenger 1998). In chapter five I will address the second sub-question that sought to uncover the meanings teachers made about writing and themselves as writers within the Writing Collaborative.

This chapter presents data that emerged during analysis to identify the practices that facilitated the building of the Writing Collaborative, serving to uncover the meanings teachers made about writing and their identities as writers and teachers of writing. It is important to note that as the facilitator of the new community, there were structures and practices I initiated to launch the Writing Collaborative. In chapter three I described the *Collaborative Space*, which included a description of the general format for each session, the book study, and the writer's notebook. Additionally, in Appendix A, I provided a

detailed description of each Writing Collaborative session, including its writing focus and associated activities. The context of the *Collaborative Space*, particularly the agenda for each session, is important to the understanding of the practices that developed and how teachers responded to these practices in the community. These practices were often influenced by the writing topics, writing tasks, and the structure of the collaborative sessions. In other words, the Writing Collaborative was not a blank slate when teachers joined the community; not all of the practices were a direct outcome of the teachers' engagement. So, while I promoted the creation of the Writing Collaborative, bringing certain practices to the community, the teachers also negotiated and developed their own practices unique to the Writing Collaborative, most notably the practice of sharing. This chapter addresses the practice of sharing and the ways in which teachers responding to sharing.

I present the findings of the practice data through the characteristics of practice that form a community: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) to explain how the responses to share practices served to bring coherence to the community. In examining the talk that occurred around the share practices, I drew from Bakhtin's (1986) concept of speech genres, particularly his notions of dialogic exchange, the utterances and responsive reactions, to illustrate the complex ways teachers engaged in the share practices that were instrumental in building the Writing Collaborative. Furthermore, I refer to positioning in this chapter to demonstrate its relation to the share practices of the community. It is through active participation in the norms and practices of the community that teachers learn, which implies that the shaping

of identities is an essential aspect of engagement in community practices (Yamakawa, Forman, & Ansell, 2005).

The Practice of Sharing

Associating practice and community serves to define a special type of community (Wenger, 1998). Analysis of the talk among the teachers revealed that the practice of sharing, specifically the practices for responding to sharing, became the critical element that not only defined what it meant to be a participant in the community, but ultimately brought cohesiveness to it. For this study, a share practice was defined as participation in which teachers revealed ideas, knowledge, texts, resources, or personal experiences to others and how other members of the community responded. The initiation of sharing, what I am calling “invitations to share,” occurred in multiple ways: 1) as a facilitator of the Writing Collaborative, I provided open invitations to share during each session, 2) teachers volunteered to share, 3) teachers initiated their own sharing, and 4) teachers nominated others to share.

Sharing became the focal practice that allowed teachers to negotiate meanings about writers and writing as well as shape their identities as writers and teachers of writing. In order to determine the share practices, I examined which teachers shared, the context in which they shared, their methods for sharing, but more importantly, how teachers responded to the sharing and how they drew upon the Collaborative’s share practices. The meanings teachers made and the ways in which they negotiated their identities as writers were inherent in the share practices of the community. In chapter five I will discuss the construction of meaning relative to the Writing Collaborative,

however, it is important to first discuss the practices that helped to facilitate those meanings and, subsequently, the teachers' writer identities that were shaped.

Through the review of observation field notes from videotapes of the Writing Collaborative sessions, teacher interviews, and teachers' writing artifacts, the data revealed that teachers engaged in seven types of share practices, each with different characteristics and purposes: (a) interject humor; (b) praise and encourage; (c) support and affirm; (d) ask questions; (e) explore ideas; (f) share knowledge and beliefs; and (g) narrate stories. Each of the share practices along with sample data will be discussed below. Table 2 in chapter 3 provided a summary of the share practices the teachers used to build the Writing Collaborative and support the exploration of writing identities. In this chapter, I will provide individual tables that illustrate each type of share practice relative to the dimensions of practice of a community (Wenger, 1998).

Mutual Engagement: Creating Relationships

One of the characteristics of practice that brings cohesiveness to a community is the mutual engagement of the participants (Wenger, 1998). This entails interactions among the members, establishing norms and oftentimes close-knit relationships in the process (Wenger, 2000). It requires members to be competent contributors and trusted partners in these interactions (Wenger, 1998). In essence, the relationships established in a community of practice serve to facilitate the shared goals of the community.

What made the Writing Collaborative different from other professional learning opportunities to which most teachers are accustomed was that it consisted of members who selected themselves. In other words, the teachers who participated did so because

they were interested in collaborating and networking about writing. When people who share similar interests come together, they naturally develop friendships and relationships (Horne, 2012). The teachers in the Writing Collaborative shared several common interests that initially drew them together. First, they taught middle or high school English in their respective schools. Second, they were open to collaborating and networking with other secondary English teachers. Most importantly, they had some level of interest in writing whether it was for personal or professional reasons. While Don, Margaret, and Wes were colleagues at the same high school and Leah and Mindy were colleagues at the nearby middle school, none of the teachers had a history of sustained engagement with one another relative to writing. Through participation in the community, they were able to talk, interact and feel connected. However, in order for the teachers to feel as if they were authentic members of the Writing Collaborative, some element had to enable their engagement to help develop the relationships that would foster the community's goal of exploring writing and their identities as writers (Wenger, 1998). The specific types of sharing that served to build relationships and enable engagement in the community were *interject humor* and *praise and encourage*. These responses to sharing served to mutually engage the teachers, but more importantly to build and sustain relationships among the teachers. Table 6 depicts the share practices along with detailed descriptors and their session occurrence that promoted mutual engagement within the Writing Collaborative.

Table 6. Share Practices That Promote Mutual Engagement

| | Share Practice | Types | Practice Descriptors | WC Sessions |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Mutual Engagement | Interject Humor | <i>Self-deprecating</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belittling one's own writing, writing process or ideas • Keeping others' expectations of oneself in check • Admitting one's shortcomings | 1,3,5,6,7,8 |
| | | <i>Good-natured ridicule</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mocking others, their ideas or comments in jest • Poking fun at a topic or issue under discussion • Making light of everyday experiences | |
| | | <i>Put others at ease</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easing a tense or awkward situation | |
| | Praise and Encourage | <i>Talents or Successes</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing others' talents inside and outside the collaborative • Applauding others' personal and professional accomplishments | 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 |
| | | <i>Writing, Styles or Techniques</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complimenting a writer's specific style and lines of text • Admiring a writer's use of literary techniques and elements • Encouraging the writer to pursue a writing idea | |

Interject humor. Victor Borge, a Danish comedian and musician, once humorously and affectionately stated, “Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.” Humor has the potential to draw people together. The ability to laugh at oneself or use humor in jest facilitates the building of friendly relationships. In her study of Inkshed, a Canadian writing community, Horne (2007) discovered that humor was a defining characteristic among its members, the inkshedders. “Since its inception, humour, lightheartedness and an ability to laugh at oneself have been characteristic of Inkshed” (p. 108). For the teachers in the Writing Collaborative, humor was a typical

response to the shared practices of the community. In almost all of the sessions, teachers interjected humor for *self-deprecation*, *good-natured ridicule*, or to *put others at ease*.

Self-deprecation. Self-deprecating humor was a way for teachers to admit their shortcomings and keep others' expectations of themselves in check. Self-deprecation was most evident when teachers belittled their own writing, writing process or ideas about writing. In session one, I asked the teachers to sketch or represent visually their ideas or characteristics of a writer. Don, for example, took a realistic, almost simplistic view of what it means to be a writer and how writers affect others. Although I provided Don an invitation to share his visual, his body language on the video indicated a hesitancy to share. The dialogue excerpt below demonstrates, through self-deprecation, how he perceived his own ideas of what it means to be a writer:

- Allison: So, Don, do you want to share yours?
- Don: Yeah, it's just the written word, spread to the world. It doesn't matter whether it's the Koran, the Bible, the Magna Carta, the Constitution... whoever writes has the ability to affect everybody.
- Margaret: uh, huh.
- Don: Now, that's pretty deep right there. (sarcasm)
- Margaret: Oh, that's VERY deep, Don. (chuckles)
- Don: Can we repeat that for the camera? (laughs)

Don's response to sharing his own writing was a good example of how he promoted himself as someone who does not write deep, thought-provoking texts. His sarcastic comment that his writing piece was "very deep" seemed to be a subtle way of saying, "maybe mine wasn't as deep as others." In a dialogic exchange, Bakhtin (1986)

suggested that meaning is created at the juncture of the speaker and the listener. The listener, in response to the speaker, may alter, refute, extend, question, or affirm (Danielewicz, 2001). “Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69). This was clearly illustrated when Margaret, serving as the listener, jokingly agreed that Don’s writing was “VERY deep.” This self-deprecating idea was perpetuated further when Don asked for Margaret’s comment to be repeated for the camera.

The entire dialogic exchange demonstrated the way in which Don responded to the share practices of the collaborative, but also how he was able to position himself as one who does not produce thought-provoking texts, keeping the other members’ expectations of him as a writer in check. Though Don used humor as a way to participate in the community, the issue of being a full member of the community concerned him. After the session that evening, he expressed his thoughts to me saying, “I noticed that my writings in the collaborative, or at least the portions that are shared aloud, aren’t as deep as the others.” Rolling his eyes apologetically he continued, “Maybe I am a fish out of water.” Wenger (1998) argued, “each participant in a community of practice finds a unique place and gains a unique identity, which is both further integrated and further defined in the course of engagement in practice” (pp. 75-76). As the Writing Collaborative sessions continued, Don often responded to the share practices with humor, providing him an avenue for mutual engagement in the community.

Good-natured ridicule. Another type of humor related to the share practices revealed in the data was that of good-natured ridicule. Everyone loves a good laugh, and

the Writing Collaborative was certainly no exception. This specific type of humor was used frequently in the Writing Collaborative, providing a relaxed, comfortable environment, which fostered engagement with one another. Mocking others or their comments, poking fun at a topic under discussion, or making light of everyday experiences all in jest became commonplace among the teachers, reinforcing the value of humor to the community.

Though all of the teachers in the collaborative interjected humor to some extent, Margaret, Brian, Leah, and Don used humor to respond to sharing more often than any other member, typically in interaction with one another.

For Margaret, good-natured ridicule illustrated her gregarious personality and how she saw herself as a member of the collaborative. Often, she acknowledged being the oldest member of the collaborative by jokingly referring to herself as “old as dirt” or “having walked with Moses.”

Margaret also used humor, particularly ridicule, to enliven a discussion and bring laughter to the group. When taping of session three began, teachers were getting settled with materials and snacks. While waiting on other teachers to arrive, Margaret, Brian, and Leah engaged in a discussion of their spring yard work and preparations. This informal talk launched the sharing of the “good news” segment. Typically, I formally began the session by asking if anyone had any good news or any items they would like to share with the group. This day, however, while I was making last minute adjustments to the video equipment, Brian informally engaged the teachers in a dialogue of his spring

yard work and an authentic writing opportunity that had arisen from it. In the following conversation, Margaret responded humorously to Brian's discussion of compost.

- Leah: Yeah, that's where we throw all of our scraps.
- Brian: I bought one of those plastic cylinder things you can put your compost in and keep rolling in....
- Margaret: That's what ours is...ours you flip upside down.
- Brian: You can use it to aerate. The screw-on lid, which reminds me of a submarine for some reason...I'm not sure what those...they are like rivets that hold that brown thing to the cylinder and they have all popped loose. I spun it and everything went *ploop*. (Margaret laughs hysterically; others chuckle)
- Brian: I want to write them. I am going to write the company and say, "I bought this last year, and it's already given out."
- Margaret: Are you trying to tell me your shit will fly? I couldn't resist that...the devil made me say that!
- Brian: Yeah, well....that's exactly what happened.
- Margaret: We have chickens in our back yard that run loose. So you can imagine the poop we have.

Just as in this example, Margaret's humor served to set the tone of the collaborative, particularly in the early sessions where teachers were determining how to take part in the community and build relations with one another. Subsequently, Margaret's humor, as well as other members, promoted friendship, trust and collaboration, which were important in establishing the community.

Put others at ease. Humor also served to ease the discomfort some members felt when sharing their own writing, writing ideas, or perspectives on a topic under discussion. As Wenger (1998) explained, "Most situations that involve sustained

interpersonal engagement generate their fair share of tensions and conflicts” (p. 77). For some of the teachers, the fear of exposing their ideas or sharing written texts with a group of people for whom they were barely familiar created feelings of anxiety and vulnerability. One of the formal ways for sharing their texts occurred through inkshedding. I introduced inkshedding during session two in order to facilitate sharing of writing among the teachers. Inkshedding, as a formal process, entailed having members provide written or oral feedback on one another’s text. In a post interview with Margaret, she explained how inkshedding and sharing her ideas with others made her feel vulnerable and apprehensive. She stated, “I have a very difficult time exposing myself to my peers. I’m afraid they will use that information against me. And I don’t like exposing myself, baring my soul.” When discussing topics that were personally revealing, Margaret often guarded her words and shared information with caution.

In session six, teachers wrote a piece about the impact they wanted their words to have on others. This was an inkshedding assignment whereby teachers’ papers were passed around the group for initial comments and reflections. Margaret previously voiced that she was having a difficult time with this assignment. To initiate dialogue about the inkshedding process, I asked teachers to share how it felt to have others comment on their writing. In the following conversation, Margaret reflected hesitantly on the experience of having others in the collaborative read and comment on her essay, “Power of Words.” In doing so, Wes recognized her discomfort and used light-hearted humor to ease Margaret’s apprehensiveness:

- Allison: So, how did it feel to have others comment on your writing?
- Margaret: They talked about the fact that they understood, and they really meant that they're just like what he (Brian) said they were. Some people's words may just be their way of clearing the heart instead of the impression you are getting. Some people say things and don't even realize what's coming out of their mouths. We've all done that sometimes. And I have to admit, and I will...I told Allison this. This is the hardest thing I've ever tried to do. And I didn't want to expose myself, so I picked something that was very neutral to write about with words and that was my mother because she is very neutral and all of you can equate to somebody that's crazy and a little off.
- Wes: I'm sitting right next to ya! Ha ha. We are everywhere.
- Margaret: Yeah? Ok, thanks! So, but she's my mother and her words do hurt and bite. I am much more guarded with my writing and my feelings on my paper than I am with my mouth, unlike her.

Wes's contribution of humor to the conversation, short-lived as it may have been, helped to relieve the discomfort and uncertainty Margaret may have felt sharing her writing with others during the inkshed activity. In an unexpected way, the interjection of humor encouraged Margaret's risk taking when sharing her writing and ideas and established trust between Wes and her, serving to develop their relationship further. "Developing relationships with community members facilitates identification with those members and therefore with the community" (Horne, 2012, pp.37-38). In her post interview Margaret reflected on the process of inkshedding with these thoughts:

But I do feel vulnerable in the fact that I have put myself out there. But I can't see not doing it and not writing and not doing it correctly, putting myself out there. It certainly is easier when you can trust your colleagues to understand.

Humor, in response to sharing, was a way to diffuse tension, develop interpersonal relationships, and, quite frankly, have a good time. Therefore, humor and its slight nuances served a legitimate purpose in the Writing Collaborative. As these examples illustrate, humor was expressly represented and helped to shape the interactions among the teachers.

Praise and encourage. While humor in the Writing Collaborative opened up spaces for relationship building and good-natured fun, praise and encouragement of others' successes inside and outside the collaborative along with positive recognition for the writing of others were important to sustaining and supporting these new-found relationships and garnering trust among the members. Praise and encouragement also served a role in the negotiation of identities taking place in the collaborative by validating the teachers' positions relative to their self-reported accomplishments in the classroom and the written texts that were shared during the Writing Collaborative sessions. Other people's opinions are powerful sources for confirming and shaping one's identity (Danielewicz, 2001). Therefore, words of encouragement and praise become an important dialogic process among the members of the collaborative, increasing participation and collaboration.

Successes and accomplishments. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the *Good News* portion that commenced each session proved to be a space for teachers to engage in brief conversations about topics or events that were meaningful to them. In session two, Brian was eager to share news about his students' performances on a recent benchmark assessment. He summarized the performance of his gifted students, but detailed the

performance of his “below average” students who surpassed his expectations. While Wes responded with a congratulatory nod, Leah, Larissa, and I verbalized our praise and encouragement for his success in the classroom. In the following dialogue, Brian positioned himself as a teacher who supports the growth of students who are designated as low-performing:

Brian: I’m tickled with my benchmark results we just got! Of course the gifted class is going to look just great cause they just do. But they did really well.

Allison: Well, good. That’s great news.

Brian: I mean, as an AIG class, they did really well. Some of the nonfiction we’re doing seems to be paying off. But I have a little 14-student 8th grade group, core 4, you know? The whole end of the day thing that happens all the time and stuff. And there are some kids in there who are sub literate. I mean really social promotion every step of the way all the way up to 8th grade. Three word sentences. Stuff like that. They are not sentences, but you know what I mean. THEY beat the school average!

Allison: Wow!

Brian: I was absolutely astonished...they beat the school average and they did as well as the county.

Leah: That’s cool!

Brian: So, all this hair pulling has gotten us somewhere.

Allison: Something is paying off.

Brian: Yeah, I feel really good about those guys. And when I told them about it, they felt good about themselves and maybe that will fertilize the future.

Larissa: That’s encouraging!

Brian's eagerness to share the successful performance of his students showed his willingness to position himself as an effective teacher. "Positioning locates people in a particular conversational space. During conversations teachers always utter from a certain perspective, and their discursive locations reflect their own point of view" (Yamakawa, Forman, and Ansell, 2005, p. 20). Consequently, Brian's reflexive positioning was reinforced through the complimentary and congratulatory remarks made by Leah, Larissa, and me. In turn, these interactions contributed to Brian's identity building through the share practices exhibited in the collaborative.

Writing styles, structures, and techniques. *Praise and encourage* was also exhibited when teachers shared writing that was generated in the collaborative. A significant step in becoming a full participant in the Writing Collaborative involved sharing one's written text with other members. This was often accomplished through the process of inkshedding. For some teachers in the Writing Collaborative, the process of sharing their written text with others was intimidating. These teachers shared common feelings of inadequacy and trepidation. Horne (2012) suggested "feelings of anxiety and vulnerability are connected to newcomers' desire to respond in a way that will enable mutual engagement with the collective" (p. 56). Considering that all of the teachers were, in essence, newcomers to the community, it makes sense that some would experience a lack of confidence and uncertainty of how to engage in the practice of sharing and responding to writing (Horne, 2007).

Ways that teachers combatted the fears of sharing and responding to one another's writing was by complimenting, praising, and encouraging each other's efforts.

Complimenting a writer's specific style or lines of text, admiring a writer's use of literary techniques or elements, and encouraging a writer to pursue a writing idea typified the ways in which teachers responded to those who shared their writing pieces. In one such episode, Larissa volunteered to read her poem that was generated from the "Power of Words" writing assignment. Before she read her poem, Larissa blushed, fanned herself, and commented that she was very nervous. With a little encouragement from the community, she read her poem in its entirety and received supporting responses from others.

- Allison: Mmmm...that was really good. Read that last line again.
- Larissa: *I have nothing but words, words to blanket you.*
- Brian: Cool verse.
- Larissa: So, I want my words to be a blanket. Not a wet blanket, but...
- Leah: I like the superman cape to a base, you know...the woobie...that you carry around and tie around your neck that plays all the parts. I had one, a blanket, it was everything...it was a superman cape. It was a base that I put right here, "you're it!" You know?
- Larissa: So, I would like my words to be everything, but they're not. And like you [Leah] I don't always have the right thing to say, so I don't say any words, well, sometimes I may say inappropriate things (lol). But most of the time I don't say anything. Cause they don't come out right.

In this example, Larissa's writing efforts were supported and encouraged several ways:

- (a) I commented that a specific line of text was very appealing to me and asked her to read that line again
- (b) Brian reaffirmed the quality of the line of text by claiming that it was a "cool verse" and
- (c) Leah extended the discussion by sharing a personal insight and

story to support Larissa's metaphor of a blanket. This episode of cumulative talk as described by Mercer (2000), illustrated how "language is used to build a joint identity, a shared, intersubjective perspective on the topic of conversation in which individual differences of perception or judgment are minimized," (p.102) supporting teachers' writing attempts and efforts.

As teachers became more comfortable sharing and responding to writing, their engagement in the Writing Collaborative increased. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that demonstration of learning is achieved through active participation in a community, directly influencing the identity-building of teachers. For Larissa, who did not identify herself as a writer coming into the collaborative, receiving praise and encouragement for her writing facilitated her active engagement in the sessions and helped to shape her identities as a writer. In her post interview she summed up her experiences of sharing and responding to writing this way:

Larissa: It was very encouraging because I don't like to speak up unless I think I have a neat idea. Sometimes my neat ideas, people look at me like "what is she thinking"? But then other ones, you know, like we responded all together and so I think it makes me feel like I'm going more on the right track, that maybe I am worthy of being able to put things on paper and people looking over it and reading it.

The Writing Collaborative provided a consistent, safe space for teachers to engage and interact with one another. Sharing one's accomplishments and having them recognized by others brought a feeling of camaraderie and collegiality. For those who were hesitant to share and respond to writing, the share practice of *praise and encourage* conveyed a

message of continued support for teachers as they took risks and made efforts in their writing.

Summary

Interject Humor and *Praise and Encourage* were used significantly in the Writing Collaborative, shaping the teachers' interactions and influencing the way the community emerged. "To develop effective group practices, individuals have to interact to form relationships in substantive and particular ways" (Supovitz, 2002, p.1598). These shared practices were key elements in the mutual engagement of the teachers, serving to build relationships and trust among the teachers.

Joint Enterprise: Making Sense of Writing

A second dimension of practice that lends coherence and formation to a community is that of joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998). According to Wenger, members negotiate and pursue a joint or shared goal and hold one another mutually accountable through joint activities and engagement in the community. Sharing a common endeavor and being able to contribute to it (Wenger, 2000) allowed the members of the community to make sense of their situations and pursuits. Horne (2007) described a joint enterprise in this way:

Joint enterprise describes the way that a community is able to function and is integrally related with mutual engagement as it reflects the results of the negotiation that takes place as teachers generate understanding, knowledge, and purpose. (p. 48)

For the teachers in the Writing Collaborative, making sense of writing and themselves as writers became a collaborative endeavor. Wenger (1998) argued that the enterprise of a

community goes beyond a mere statement of purpose, but rather a process of negotiation that illustrates the complex ways that members mutually engage in the community. “The enterprise is joint not in that everybody believes the same thing or agrees with everything, but in that it is communally negotiated” (Wenger, 1998, p.78). It is important to note that the teachers in the Writing Collaborative had varied experiences and backgrounds with writing and different views of themselves as writers coming into the community. This diversity among the teachers was what made engagement in the practices possible and productive (Wenger, 1998). In order for the community to make progress toward its goal of exploring writing and writing identities, it was important for the teachers to share their individual perspectives for the community’s consideration and likewise listen to the contributions of others to enhance the progress toward these goals (Palinscar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford, & Brown, 1998). Consequently, they engaged in dialogue with one another, exchanging ideas, knowledge, and opinions that “directly influenced each other’s understanding as a matter of routine” (Wenger, 1998, p.75).

Data revealed that joint enterprise was evident in the ways in which the teachers used the practice of sharing to make meanings of writing and themselves as writers. Engaging in readings, discussions, and activities centered on writing provided the common enterprise for the Writing Collaborative and created a space for them to demonstrate agreement, propose opposing ideas, question perspectives, and explore new ideas related to writing. The share practices that facilitated the shared goal of making sense of writing and themselves as writers as revealed through talk included *support and affirm*, *ask questions*, and *explore ideas*. Table 7 summarizes the share practices that

illustrated the joint enterprise of the Writing Collaborative and ways in which the teachers worked together to create a context for making sense of writing and themselves as writers.

Table 7. Share Practices That Illustrate Joint Enterprise

| | Share Practice | Types | Practice Descriptors | WC Sessions |
|------------------|--------------------|--|---|------------------|
| Joint Enterprise | Support/ Affirm | <i>Agree with or affirm others' comments</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate agreement with others' comments • Affirm and support knowledge and ideas of others • Admit to similar practices | 1,2,3,4, 5,6,7,8 |
| | Ask Questions | <i>Details / clarification</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain better understanding • Clarify articulated thoughts • Secure more information | 1,2,3,4, 5,6,7,8 |
| | | <i>Self-affirmation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm one's own beliefs • Relieve self-doubt | |
| | | <i>Propose opposing thoughts</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question others in order to consider opposing ideas | |
| | Explore Ideas | <i>Recognize or Present new ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize new ideas presented by others • Present new ideas to the community | 1,2,3,4 5,6,7,8 |
| | | <i>Recognize or Present opposing ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize opposing ideas presented by others • Present opposing ideas to the community | |
| | | <i>Clarify Ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate others' ideas by revoicing • Restate ones' own ideas in a different way | |
| | | <i>Name Ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name to others' ideas | |
| | | <i>Extend Ideas</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend ideas by elaborating, providing more detail or examples | |

Support and affirm. Working toward a common goal does not necessarily imply agreement among all members of a community (Wenger, 1998). In fact, revealing conflicting attitudes, perspectives, or approaches to the work of the community serves to enhance the learning that takes place. However, for the teachers in the Writing

Collaborative, supporting and affirming one another's comments, knowledge, ideas, or practices related to writing or the topics that ensued in the Collaborative were important to their meaning making and continued mutual engagement. Cuddapah and Clayton (2011), in applying Wenger's communities of practice theory to explore a new teacher cohort, also found that during talk, new teachers engaged in *affirming* others' beliefs and practices on a regular and frequent basis. Likewise, Fairbanks and LaGrone (2006), studying talk in a Teacher Research Group, discovered that *affirming* was used to support teacher researchers' constructions of knowledge about teaching. In the Writing Collaborative, there were several ways in which *support and affirm* occurred. During discussions of the book study, interactions with writing tasks, and participation in inkshedding, teachers agreed with one another's comments, affirmed knowledge that other's shared, or admitted to similar ideas or practices that were voiced by one another.

For example, during session five Wes responded to a quote in our book study by Ralph Fletcher (1996a) in which Fletcher stated, "Memories have a way of embedding themselves in special places" (p.89). Making a connection to the quote, Wes shared a personal story about the house he grew up in and how it was difficult, now that it was being rented, to visit the house and see the changes that had taken place. Reflecting on the memories it evoked for him, Wes shared, "On the second floor we had a wall we measured me and my brothers' heights; I mean all the memories that are in that physical location, and seeing those with somebody else living in that space is just very odd." In the dialogue that followed his comment, Brian and Margaret responded by affirming

Wes' interpretation of the quote and making personal connections that further supported his explanation of how memories embed themselves in specific places in our lives.

- Brian: We all have old songs that are like a time machine.
- Margaret: Absolutely!
- Brian: The first few notes come up...
- Margaret: Buddy Holly
- Brian: ...on the radio and you're like *wham* thrown back into 8th grade, walking around with a friend or whatever.
- Margaret: When I've gone back to houses in Texas where I lived for a long time...it's closure for me. I have to go back and see that it looks ok, that it's happy. That's me. I have to...I don't go inside, but I drive by and say, "It's neat. It's clean. It's happy...ok." And I can put that to rest.

In this example, Brian and Margaret's responses served to affirm and support Wes's own conclusions about memories. Brian used a simile to illustrate how songs, like time machines, can take us back to a particular time and place just as Wes's memory had done for him. By doing this, Brian was affirming Wes's contribution to the discussion.

Margaret's emphatic response, "Absolutely," was noteworthy as well. According to Bakhtin (1996), in a dialogic exchange, when the listener grasps or senses the meaning of the speech, she immediately develops an active, responsive attitude toward what has been said. The responsive attitude that the listener, now the speaker, adopts is often expressed with emotion and evaluation. The word "absolutely" when spoken with expressive intonation "is no longer a word, but a completed utterance expressed by one word"

(Bakhtin, 1996, p. 85). In this sense, Margaret's exclamatory reply added weight to its meaning, confirming the shared understanding created in their conversation.

Teachers in the collaborative also supported and affirmed others' comments and beliefs specifically related to their writing practices by acknowledging allegiance to the same or similar practices. In session seven, I presented the teachers with Anne Lamott's essay "Shitty First Drafts" to help facilitate conversation around the writing process. Teachers engaged in rich conversations about drafting that proved to be supportive and, in general, aligned with one another's ideas. For instance, Don initiated a conversation about the act of drafting a piece of writing, admitting that he composes only one draft. This comment elicited several responses from the other teachers in which they admitted to a similar practice.

Don: You know, I never wrote more than one draft, ever.

Allison: I don't write many drafts.

Don: I just go back and change the words, but I never rewrite a draft.

Leah: Two drafts and that's it. I'm the one who labors over every word, trying to make it perfect the first time. Even if it's not really something that's not going to somebody I'm scared will see it. I just want to write it (gestures a perfect paper) the first time.

Larissa: I sometimes have two papers at one time. I will rough draft on the side then work it into my piece then back and forth like that.

By admitting to a similar process for drafting, the teachers positioned themselves as writers aligned in their responses to multiple drafts. In doing so, they reinforced Don's participation in the community and demonstrated allegiance to a particular writing practice. Supporting and affirming seemed to help Don become more invested in the

discussion as it ensued, allowing him to move from the peripheral of the community to the inside as a legitimate participant (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Supporting and affirming one another's contributions to the Writing Collaborative was one way that teachers were able to dialogically engage in the sense making of the community, giving common purpose to the focus of writing and their identities as writers.

Ask questions. Important to the enterprise of a community are the ways in which the members learn from each other through joint activities (Horne, 2007). For the Writing Collaborative, dialogic interactions served as the most prominent means for negotiating ideas about writing and what it meant to be a writer. To that end, asking questions in response to sharing was a common method for encouraging participation and pushing the goals of the collaborative forward. From my analysis of the video transcriptions, I gleaned three main purposes for asking questions: (a) for details and clarification, (b) for self-affirmation, and (c) to propose opposing thoughts.

Details and clarification. Asking questions to gain additional information and to clarify a member's spoken thoughts was present to some degree in all eight sessions of the Writing Collaborative. Teachers tended to ask more questions in response to sharing during the book study segments than any other time during the sessions. Most often, this entailed asking questions in relation to a quote or line of text that teachers shared and elaborated on. In a discussion from session seven, Larissa shared and explained a quote from the book study that resonated with her, prompting me to ask thought-provoking questions about her inspiration for a recent piece of writing she shared.

- Larissa: And I went with the paragraph down below that...“Writing opens doors in us we never knew existed.” It’s like doing that thing I just did [heart map]. It’s like when I get started I have one thing in mind, but then it goes somewhere else. And where it goes, it’s like astonishing sometimes. I can’t really believe I had this inside of me. You know? Where did this come from? But... (laughs)
- Allison: Do you know what might have inspired...? Like your heart map, you had no idea it was going to turn out like that. What might have made the difference?
- Larissa: I think I have inner feelings that I’ve inhibited that I don’t release until my creative juices start flowing, and sometimes I have to go back in these recesses to find out where they’re coming from.

In referencing her heart map, Larissa provided an example of how writing opened doors for her that she never realized existed. In response to Larissa’s comments, I asked probing questions to not only gain a better understanding of what she meant, but also to help her explore the questions she posed for herself. My questioning was intentional because thirty minutes earlier she had shared her heart map and she was surprised by the creativity and organization that was reflected in her writing. Larissa previously commented, “I asked myself, ‘Why am I putting it in this kind of order?’ And I thought, well that’s how my creativity goes; it’s all...obscure, I guess. But in the end, it comes together.” As the session progressed, it was evident she was still struggling to understand how her writing and writing style evolved. Therefore, my probing questions prompted her to think more deeply about herself as a writer, to which she concluded was a result of her “creative juices” that helped to release her inhibitions.

Self-affirmation. While teachers used affirmation to demonstrate support for and agreement with one another’s comments and ideas, some of the teachers also used

questioning as a form of self-affirmation to relieve self-doubt and affirm their own beliefs or notions about writing or a topic. Larissa, who never clearly identified herself as a writer, posed questions during book study discussions that affirmed her own ideas or relieved doubt she felt about ideas she had shared with the teachers in the collaborative. For example, in session four Larissa, in discussing how talk influences our perceptions of a person, posed questions to the group for self-affirming purposes.

- Larissa: I skipped to page 59, “Writers are fascinated by talk...” And I underlined, “The way we talk says a ton about who we are.” Which I think...is ...I mean, that’s just wild, right? Because you can look at somebody...I mean you can have an idea of a person and until they open their mouth and the words that come out, it just, it either enhances it or it really disintegrates, right? Yeah...
- Wes: Better to say nothing and thought a fool than to open your mouth....
- Larissa: Yeah, exactly...and I’m learning this.

Wes relieved Larissa’s doubt about her beliefs by responding with a paraphrased quote by Mark Twain that suggested it is better to remain silent and thought a fool than to say something and confirm it. Larissa immediately anticipated Wes’s reply and agreement with her ideas of how a person’s talk can determine our perceptions of others. Her anticipation was evident in her subsequent reply in which she interrupted his quoting and indicated agreement. In analyzing this dialogic exchange through a Bakhtinian (1981; 1986) lens, from the beginning of her utterance, Larissa expected an active response from those to whom her thoughts were addressed. Bakhtin refers to this concept as

addressivity in which “the utterance has both an author and an addressee” (p. 95) who are active participants in the conversation. Bakhtin further explained:

From the very beginning, the speaker expects a response from them, an active responsive understanding. The entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response. (p.94)

The mutual collaboration between Larissa and Wes generated shared meanings about the topic of talk, but also served to alleviate her self-doubt regarding her own ideas. This example demonstrated discourse as a process in which “dialogue creates the self (‘what I think’), generates knowledge or understanding (the content, ideas, shared meaning), and constitutes the other (‘what she thinks’)” (Danielewicz, 2001, p.145).

Opposing thoughts. Finally, teachers asked questions in order to propose opposing thoughts and ideas for consideration by the group. However, this response to sharing did not emerge until after session four, suggesting that as teachers became mutually engaged in the collaborative new responses to share practices emerged to facilitate discussions of writing and writers. Although teachers had expressed their own beliefs about writing and writers, which stood in opposition to others, their differences were not taken up as a subject of talk. In session seven, in discussing the reading of Lamott’s essay, “Shitty First Drafts,” Margaret responded to my explanation of fear of writing a poor draft by asking questions that proposed ideas that were not under my consideration.

Allison: One thing I highlighted in the very beginning in the second paragraph is, “All good writers write them.” Meaning that these shitty first drafts...and I made a comment, I said, well, knowing

that and convincing people of that will give more people confidence that it's okay to produce something. But, and as I said that, that's totally opposite of who I am because I labor over every word. When it finally gets on paper, there's not much revision going to be done to it. I don't freewrite. I just don't sit down and get it all out then worry about moving it around and cleaning it all up and polishing it. It comes out that way. Which is a much more laborious process...at least it's mentally more taxing. I don't know...so, it made me feel better, but then again it didn't. I'm terrified of writing a crappy first draft.

Margaret: Well, don't you think it depends on what you're writing for? Or that you labor over it or you're just writing for the joy of writing? If I'm writing for just the joy, then I'm *zoom zoom zoom*. If I'm writing something to send to someone or it's got to be professionally done as you, I will take...be very meticulous.

Wes: I also like the part that was the guy...one writer noted "it's not like you don't have a choice, because you do- you can either type, or kill yourself." Lol

Leah: I like that!

In this example, Margaret's questions served to propose alternative thinking about the writing of drafts in that it is related to the writer's purpose and audience. She used personal examples of her own writing approach to illustrate her point. In writing for joy and pleasure, she is not as concerned with style, structure, and mechanics, and therefore is not as concerned about how it comes out on the page. However, Margaret argued writing professionally requires her to be very meticulous. By making these claims, she positioned herself as a writer who approaches a writing task based on its purpose and audience, but also as one who is comfortable producing a less than perfect draft. Her questions also served to position me, suggesting that under specific purposes, writing a "crappy first draft" is acceptable, if not expected. I resisted this positioning by not taking

up the storyline to which I was invited, (Davies & Harré, 1990) choosing to let my belief that writing crappy drafts is terrifying stand. Wenger (1998) argued that a joint enterprise does not imply agreement throughout the community. “In fact, in some communities, disagreement can be viewed as a productive part of the enterprise” (p. 78). Thus, discursive tensions and contradictions are resolved as members “enhance or silence particular words and associations” (Barton & Tusting, 2005, p.115). While I would not characterize my resistance to Margaret’s positioning as one of tension, it demonstrated how our dissimilar responses were interconnected, contributing to the shared knowledge of the community. Margaret’s questions also reflected the importance of taking initiative to ask questions. Taking initiative to *ask questions* of one another during conversations assisted teachers in gaining a better understanding of one another’s contributions to the collaborative and provided a way for teachers to propose opposing or alternative thoughts for consideration by the community. In the last turn of the conversation, Wes interjected a humorous solution to the debate that ultimately brought the discussion to a close.

Explore ideas. Language, and the ways in which members of a community use language to make meaning, plays a significant role in the negotiation of joint enterprises (Barton & Tusting, 2005). To this end, exploratory talk and cumulative talk were important discursive strategies that enabled the teachers to focus on exploring and explaining ideas about writing and themselves as writers. Data from all eight sessions revealed talk around exploring ideas that entailed several kinds of conversations: acknowledging or presenting new ideas; acknowledging or presenting opposing ideas; clarifying ideas by revoicing; naming ideas; and extending ideas through elaboration.

Acknowledge or present new ideas. During the Writing Collaborative sessions I noticed that teachers acknowledged, through verbal comments, new ideas presented by other members, and likewise, presented new ideas of their own to the community. During session one, I asked teachers to sketch or represent visually their idea or characteristics of a writer. I explained they could use symbols or simple illustrations, but not words. Mindy, who was the quietest participant in the collaborative, shared her representation of a writer last, admitting that she included many of the same characteristics already mentioned. However, she immediately pointed out a characteristic that the group had not mentioned and made it a focus of her contribution to the discussion.

- Mindy: I drew a stick figure and incorporated some of the things y'all did. One thing I had that we had not talked about...I put like a "no talking" sign over their mouths because...A lot of my students who like to write, don't like to talk or they have trouble talking, so they choose to write. Some of my quietest students have the best pieces of writing. They don't mind sharing what they think through their writing, but they just don't verbalize it.
- Allison: Hmm...I've never thought about that.
- Brian: Yeah, they have a lot to say, but are really intimidated by people.
- Larissa: Uh, huh. Yeah. (nods head)
- Mindy: That's their way of communicating.

In this excerpt, Mindy presented a new idea and others responded by acknowledging the idea or aligning themselves with her. For example, I acknowledged Mindy's new idea by stating that I had never given thought to how writing could support students who were reluctant to share their work verbally. Brian, however, aligned himself with Mindy by interpreting what she meant relative to quiet students and their ability to express

themselves through writing. Brian's alignment suggested he had also encountered some of these same students in his classroom. Even Larissa's utterance and non-verbal nod of her head acknowledged Mindy's idea that others in the collaborative had not considered. One aspect of a joint enterprise is "it invites new ideas as much as it sorts them out" (Wenger, 1998, p.82). By situating her responses in experiences from her classroom, Mindy shifted the focus of the discussion from examining a writer's characteristics from their own personal experiences as writers to an instructional one as seen from a teacher of writing.

Interestingly, in creating their visual representations, all but Mindy looked at writing from the perspective of themselves or general characteristics of writers. Mindy, however, took on the perspective of a teacher of writing and talked about "quiet" students in her classroom and how writing provided them an avenue for engagement in classroom activities. Similarly, in her first interview when asked to discuss the characteristics of a good writer, Mindy replied:

Um, well, I've noticed with a lot of my kids, a lot of the students who are good writers or like to write, a lot of times maybe are some of the quieter students who may not like to express themselves verbally, but they can write it down that way. People who are reflective, they like to reflect. People who are...Sometimes I think some of my visual people are better writers because they are able to describe things better maybe.

Mindy's representation of quiet students and how they are more willing to express themselves through writing than talking seemed to parallel her engagement in the Writing Collaborative and the writer identities she enacted. In comparison to the other teachers, Mindy was a silent participant in the collaborative, contributing more through written

rather than oral discourse. Her role in the community was not surprising given she had previously described her feelings about writing saying, “I feel really comfortable with it. And I’ve always said I think I’m a better writer than I am a speaker. If I have something written down and can use it, I’m a much better speaker when I have that writing.” Her point here was one of self-reflection, but also seemed to echo the voices of her “quiet” students.

Acknowledge or present opposing ideas. Teachers also acknowledged opposing ideas of others and presented opposing ideas of their own as a way to contribute to the joint sense-making of the community. The example I present stemmed from a conversation during session six that followed an inkshedding with the essays the teachers wrote on “The Power of Our Words.” I reviewed the inkshed protocols and encouraged them to ask questions, make comments, agree or disagree with ideas, or provide supportive feedback. The task was not to judge or edit the essays, but rather to react and reflect on the content. After the teachers had time to read and make comments, we debriefed about the inkshed process and how it felt to shed ink on others’ work and to have ink shed on our own work. As the conversation progressed, most of the teachers agreed that reading and commenting on one another’s writing, although a bit uncomfortable for some, was a productive experience. We described the positive aspects of inkshedding in this way:

One of the things I thought was interesting and I kind of wish we had more rotations cause, you know, the first time through it’s just you adding your comments. But, then next time you get the person’s text plus the previous person’s comments, and it was kind of cool to see what someone else had thought,

what parts were interesting to them, and, you know, just some of those kinds of things can help spark some ideas. I liked that aspect of it as well.

Brian, although he thought the inkshedding process had value, felt that reading one another's work took away from the aesthetic experience and opportunities for gleaning deeper meaning from the texts. In the excerpt below, he presented an opposing idea that reflected his experiences with inkshedding.

Brian: The passing of the papers....it's nice to be able to...I learned that these guys have some good cursive. I wouldn't have known that if they read it aloud, but I found that here and wherever... even with my own students and stuff, I'd rather hear the reading. I'd rather hear the author read his work. Why? Because only they know where to emotionally accent the words they've chosen, how to pace it. You know? And stuff like that. And I feel a whole 'nother layer of meaning comes in when we get...like you know, if you've ever listened to Robert Frost musically accompanied. It's poetry. He used to make recordings of that stuff; so did James Joyce. And it's really interesting to hear, you know? It's different on a page. There's something missing. It's like it's pastel as compared to rainbow colors for me. When you guys are actually reading your own stuff, I get it even more.

In articulating his ideas, Brian provided relevant information that was explicit in supporting his opinions and reasons for preferring to hear an author read his own work as opposed to reading the text on the page as we did in the inkshedding process. As typical in exploratory talk, teachers seek each other's opinions and ask questions to elicit reasons (Mercer, 2000; Mercer & Howe, 2012). Brian, however, subsumed the teachers' inquiry by asking, "Why?" and proceeding to explain his reasons. In the conversation that ensued, the teachers engaged in a kind of co-reasoning, offering contributions that

enabled them “to make critical evaluations and reach joint conclusions” (Mercer, 2000, p.99) that aligned with Brian’s ideas.

- Margaret: So, especially like when Wes read his poem “White Laundry” last week? The last time we heard about his one red sock and his white laundry and he read it and emphasized...
- Allison: Are you talking about the intonation and the inflection?
- Brian: Yeah, that’s a big part of what I am saying.
- Wes: Well, I think that’s like the poetry I’ve done with my students. I have them read it twice and its’ amazing how different some of those readings are...some of it is just the student who volunteered maybe stumbles over the words, but to just hear how they are connecting the phrases or how they are putting emphasis and how it’s different from the other person who reads it. And it does make a big difference how it sounds in your head versus the person next to you, and it can change a lot. So, yeah, I can see advantages of both.

In exploratory talk, control of the conversation is a “constant negotiation, as speakers offer contributions which may, if partners are persuaded, determine the subsequent direction of collective thinking” (Mercer, 2000, p.99). Although Brian initiated the opposing idea, the control of the conversation shifted, to Margaret, Wes and me as we jointly negotiated the meanings and built a shared understanding from the opposing ideas Brian presented. As the conversation progressed, each of us contributed a nuance to the concept of reading aloud our own writing, exemplifying how teachers built shared and subsequently more nuanced understandings of an author reading her work aloud.

Clarify ideas. Teachers in the Writing Collaborative often clarified ideas by restating, paraphrasing or summarizing one’s own ideas or those of others. This discourse strategy, called “revoicing,” occurs when a participant’s contribution is re-uttered by

another participant in the discussion (O'Connor & Michaels, 1996). Through revoicing, a speaker may restate or slightly modify what another participant has said for the purpose of confirmation or clarification (Yamakawa, Forman, & Ansell, 2005). Clarification of ideas served as a way for teachers to check for understanding during dialogic exchanges.

Sometimes these exchanges were brief and involved only two teachers. For example, in preparation for writing the essay, "The Power of Our Words," I asked teachers to make a list of unique, interesting, or powerful words that appealed to them. In sharing her word, *graffiti*, Leah explained that it was a unique word and a type of writing she had yet to master. "I tried. I cannot make the fat letters work together and stuff. So, it's just a unique form of art that's just...that is just weird," she commented. In response, Margaret simply restated, "Graffiti," seemingly to clarify and consider Leah's selection of the word.

Other dialogic exchanges in which teachers clarified ideas occurred in longer segments and involved multiple teachers. In session four, teachers read and reflected upon an article from the *New York Times* called "A New, Noisier Way of Writing" that examined new generational writing through the use of social media such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* and its impact on writing and the writing process. I chose the article specifically to elicit conversation about writing, particularly writing in this day and age of technology and instant information. The concept that received the most attention in the article was this idea of "burp outs" – making our feelings, ideas, and thoughts public before we have reviewed or edited them. This sparked a lively discussion about the personal nature of writing and whether writers write in total isolation or if it is social and to what extent. In

the following dialogue, the teachers discussed the notion of “isolation,” illustrating the ways in which revoicing was used to clarify ideas shared among them.

- Larissa: I think in a sense, though, when you’re writing sometimes you take it so personally that you don’t want to share until you’re finished. Sometimes when I write, or I’m in a creative mode, I have to...I do isolate myself because I don’t want any distractions. I want to be one with the piece I’m creating...and maybe that’s what he’s referring to...not so much not listening, I think maybe after you’ve already picked up all these words or tidbits, sights, and sounds around you, that you are trying to formulate your words...your power on your paper.
- Allison: It’s kind of like a while ago, Wes said, “I didn’t get very far. I need some...” I anticipated you needed some quiet time; maybe it’s ...maybe he means that...cause if you shut yourself off completely you have no experiences.
- Margaret: But isolation, as she said, helps me recall because I’m able to sit down and take the time to think and recall all those sentences, all those sensations, and all those feelings. And it helps cut down the distractions. I don’t know about your life, but when I go home I want silence. I don’t want the TV on; I don’t want anything on; I don’t want any noise.
- Larissa: Because it’s like ADD...if you’re driving and something else is going on.
- Margaret: Yes, and I like that quiet time or whatever you want to call it, and it’s easier cause then my mind can work and bring out all those feelings. So, I know exactly what she’s saying.
- Brian: I think there has to be a balance. You have to go out and come back in. Sometimes we have this picture of total isolation and so when I saw...that level of serious isolation that kind of got me. I don’t know about total isolation, but you have to have a place. Just as you [Larissa] said. We talked about that in our first meeting...your writing place.
- Larissa: Yes, a writing place.
- Margaret: That’s true.

In this exchange, some of the revoicing is subtle. For example, in response to Larissa's comment that isolation occurs "after you've already picked up all these words or tidbits, sights, and sounds around you," I repeated her thought with a slight reinterpretation when I replied, "... cause if you shut yourself off completely you have no experiences." Margaret revoiced Larissa's idea of isolation as a solution to everyday distractions when she stated, "But isolation, as she said, helps me recall because I'm able to sit down and take the time to think and recall all those sentences, all those sensations, and all those feelings." Larissa's subsequent comment clarified this idea even further by using a simile to illustrate how isolation is sometimes necessary for a writer to be productive. Ultimately, Brian's conclusions served to clarify the entire discussion by stating that writers need a balance, including a writing place. Larissa's last utterance confirmed Brian's idea of isolation as a writing place by restating his exact words to which Margaret agreed.

In both of these instances, teachers revoiced one another's ideas for clarification, assisting them in the co-construction of meanings about writers and their craft.

Name ideas. Another way teachers in the collaborative responded to the share practice of *explore ideas*, contributing to the joint enterprise, was to *name* or categorize other's ideas. Wenger's (1998) concept of reification is useful when examining how teachers named or categorized the ideas of others. Although I defined reification in chapter two, I revisit the concept here to demonstrate how the process of reification served to facilitate "the negotiation of shared understandings" (Barton & Tusting, 2005. p.26) and shape the experiences (Wenger, 1998) of the teachers in the Writing

Collaborative. As stated earlier, reification is “the process of giving form to our experiences by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (Wenger, 1998, p.58). These objects then become the focus for negotiation of meaning. As a process, reification includes “making, designing, representing, naming, encoding, and describing, as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding, and recasting” (p. 59). Naming something then becomes one of the significant ways a concept becomes reified (Barton & Tusting, 2005) and becomes part of the practices of the community.

In this first example from session five, Brian had shared that a severe head injury temporarily left him with the inability to read and write fluently and the challenges he faced as a result. Specifically, this injury impacted his ability to recall meanings of vocabulary terms. In this dialogue excerpt, stemming from a quote in our book study, Brian explained how he eventually regained a lot of vocabulary he lost due to his accident.

Brian: And, uhm, the way I remember things is different now. It’s like new synopsis had to be made in order for me to recover those memories. I mean it was through friends and family and *Facebook* to some extent because of people I’ve connected with from long ago. And someone could say something to me and I all of a sudden felt a whole area of memory light up from one thing that was said, and it sent me back and I recognized it, you know? And I lost a lot of vocabulary, too. And ever since then it’s not really a new or unusual word, but one that I just forgot that I ever knew. So, when I read, it will like “Bam!” hit me like that, and I know I’ve got it for keeps again. Like it’s come back to me and stuff. Anyways, when I read that sentence it was very personal.

Larissa: Just like going home.

Brian: It’s like going home. Especially childhood and family members I’ve lost cause those are so precious to me and they’ve come back.

Here, Brian indicated that words and their meanings would come back to him at unexpected moments, triggered by everyday events. Once those memories were evoked, he realized they were there to stay. Larissa responded by naming his process of acquiring lost vocabulary by stating it was “Just like going home.” Brian revoiced her comment, signifying his agreement.

In another example from session six, Mindy shared a segment of text from our book study in which a young boy whose mother had committed suicide the previous year came to terms with her tragedy through the use of his writer’s notebook. In the excerpt below, Mindy used this quote as a springboard for explaining her idea of good writing.

Mindy: I chose one on page 106, “Hi Mom. It’s me.” I just chose the letter the little boy was gonna write to his mom who had committed suicide. It says, “With these four words he broke the silence.” It reminded me of the topic on our discussion board; to me, that’s good writing. Several people posted that good writing is the impact it has on others. But, I think also, good writing is the impact it has on you when you write it because that probably just had such a big impact on him, those four words, just starting that letter. I think that was something...that was good writing. That was something he needed to do.

Margaret: It was healing writing

Mindy: Yes.

In this stretch of talk, Mindy used the quote from the text to support her definition of “good writing.” In doing so, she reflected on previous discussions about good writing in which teachers defined it based on the impact it had on others. Although Mindy agreed that good writing could be measured by its impact on others, she offered an alternative definition by suggesting that good writing was also the impact it had on the writer,

specifically writing that fulfilled a need. Margaret recognized this type of writing and immediately named it “healing writing.” For Margaret, writing was therapeutic. When asked during her first interview about the success she had experienced with writing she commented:

Well, it’s a healing for me. It helps me heal. It’s better than drugs. But being able to put down my feelings and know that it’s my domain or my space and nobody looks at it, it really helps and that way it can help me cope with some things that go on in my life. Without being able to do that, it would stay bottled up.

By naming Mindy’s definition of writing as “healing writing,” Margaret reified an abstract idea into something more tangible (Horne, 2007) that reflected the practices and organized the meanings created.

Both of these examples illustrated the ways in which teachers’ experiences and negotiations of meanings were reinforced in the Writing Collaborative through the process of *naming* ideas of others.

Extend ideas. In responding to the share practices of the community, teachers often extended their own ideas or ideas of others through elaboration, providing details and examples to support and enhance their meanings. Extension of ideas helped teachers in the collaborative to understand the idea or concept under discussion. The conversation below took place in session six during an inkshedding on the “Power of Words” essay, and is actually the last few turns in a longer conversation among Brian, Leah, and Wes. In the exchanges prior to this excerpt, Brian shared his process for composing and how he trusted his first impulses, thinking, “the rough draft is the keeper.” He continued by

confessing his enjoyment of improvisation and producing, not worrying about what others will think. “I like to produce. That’s my thing; I produce.” His ideas stood in contrast to Leah’s, who admitted that she revisits her draft multiple times, claiming, “It’s always just a constant, ‘how can I take it to the next step?’” In this excerpt, Brian and Leah extended their thoughts and supported one another’s meaning making by elaborating on shared ideas.

- Leah: I’m constantly writing and re writing. It’s not what I want to say....
- Brian: It’s not there yet.
- Leah: It’s not there yet.
- Brian: When I write songs I’m more that way. When I’m writing a song, it needs to coordinate, the rhythm needs to coordinate with whatever the melody I got and ideas and stuff. I will edit a song like crazy to get it to land properly. But that’s not necessarily true of my prose writing.
- Leah: But my day affects...cause even here this (reads a portion of her text) is an angry text. It’s different than the piece I finally settled on. Cause it goes on how I feel. I had a bad day with kids...the first draft was really about being pissed off. I want my words to convince others to be kind, reflective, cause I’ve been harping on these kids about that. So, depending on ... I can write the same thing 6 or 7 times. So, depending on my mood, I can write about the same topic over and over and get a different result.
- Brian: So, you might have several changes.
- Leah: Very much so.

In this exchange of cumulative talk, both teachers contributed ideas, which were uncritically accepted. Cumulative talk encourages joint contributions to the discussion (Mercer, 2000) and is often marked by “repetitions, confirmations, and elaborations” (Mercer, 2004). Here Leah implied that she rewrites frequently because she is never

satisfied with her drafts. Brian completed her statement when he replied “It’s not there yet,” to which Leah repeated his words, confirming the acceptance of ideas between them. They then engaged in a discussion in which they both elaborated on the drafting process and the considerations and decisions they each make as they compose a piece of text. In Brian’s last comment he revoiced Leah’s utterance, making what Schifffrin (1987) called a “warranted inference” (as cited in O’Connor & Michaels, 1993). Brian’s inference was indicated by the discourse marker *so* which opened up an opportunity for Leah to approve or contradict his conclusion (O’Connor & Michaels, 1993) to which she emphatically agreed as evidenced by her reply. These comments exchanged between Brian and Leah were cooperative and illustrated how they negotiated meaning and built shared knowledge about the writing process by extending their ideas.

Summary

The ways in which teachers responded to the share practices in the Writing Collaborative aided their negotiations of a joint enterprise. Teachers engaged in various discursive practices that supported their goal of making sense of writing and themselves as writers. Negotiating a response to this goal was evident in the ways in which teachers responded to the practice of sharing by *supporting and affirming*, *asking questions*, and *exploring ideas* together. These practices helped teachers create resources to explore meanings of writing and themselves as writers in nuanced ways, contributing to the shared repertoire of the community.

Shared Repertoire

The final characteristic that lends coherence to a community of practice is the development of a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). In pursuing the joint enterprise of the community, participants mutually engage in joint activities, discussions, and sharing of resources and information (Wenger, 2006). Over time, the members develop joint resources for negotiating meaning and facilitating engagement in the community's practices (Wenger, 1998). The members draw from these resources in order to facilitate the enterprise of the community. The repertoire of resources includes "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become a part of its practice" (Wenger, 1998, p.83). Not only did the teachers in the Writing Collaborative share a common interest in writing, but also they developed shared resources or tools that helped them make sense of writing and themselves as writers. These joint resources developed primarily through the response to the share practices of the community and included the ways in which teachers would *share knowledge and beliefs* and *narrate personal stories*. Table 8 exemplifies the responses to the share practices teachers utilized to build a shared repertoire that served as resources for the teachers as they engaged in the Writing Collaborative.

Table 8. Share Practices That Illustrate Shared Repertoire

| | Share Practices | Types | Practice Descriptors | WC Sessions |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|---------------|
| Shared Repertoire | Share Knowledge and Beliefs | <i>Topic Specific</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute facts, information, or thoughts about a topic being discussed | 1,2,4,6,7,8 |
| | | <i>Writing and Writers</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share one's beliefs about writing Share knowledge about the writing process Share advice about writing styles and techniques Share writing resources | |
| | Narrate Stories | <i>Personal Storytelling</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relate to or confirm others' ideas by sharing a personal experience Sharing personal stories to exemplify a concept or topic being discussed Sharing personal and classroom connections | 1,3,4,5,6,7,8 |

Share knowledge and beliefs. Developing a shared repertoire of resources takes time and sustained interaction among teachers in a community (Wenger, 2006).

Although the duration of the Writing Collaborative lasted one semester, it provided time for teachers to develop some linguistics tools for engaging in conversations and writing tasks that supported their exploration of writing and themselves as writers. By sharing their knowledge and beliefs about specific topics that evolved from their conversations, writing, and themselves as writers, teachers worked jointly to create shared meanings. In examining the talk among a new teacher cohort, Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) found that the talk typically consisted of resource and information exchanges that supported their new roles as teachers. Specifically, teachers in the Writing Collaborative contributed and exchanged knowledge that was topic specific and about writing and writers.

Topic specific. As would be expected, not all of the talk that took place in the Writing Collaborative revolved around writers and writing. It was commonplace for teachers to contribute facts, information, or personal thoughts about a topic, other than

writing, during conversations. In fact, topical discussions often originated from the book study, a writing activity, or a piece of writing shared among the group, ebbing and flowing among topics of personal interest, related issues, or current events. The dialogic exchange presented here took place during the last session, which served as a writing celebration. Teachers chose a piece of writing generated from their experiences in the collaborative to share aloud. This conversation originated from Brian's song lyrics, which he wrote and performed for the group, titled "Wave to the Caboose" that used a train caboose as a literal and metaphorical representation of things gone past. He prefaced his performance by asking the group to "think about things that disappear and they're very likely not going to come back." The following long stretch of talk typified the kind of discussions the teachers engaged in around topics of interest, and I share the entire episode to demonstrate how during this cumulative talk, the teachers contributed and built knowledge together. After the performance of his song, I initiated the discussion by providing specific feedback about the writing style he used. Within one turn, I changed the direction of the conversation from one about Brian's actual piece of writing to one about the topic of his writing - trains.

Allison: So, as you got softer, softer, and softer, I could just see the caboose just going into the distance...

Brian: Well, good, because that's what I was hoping it would do, that you would see something go away at the end.

Allison: Do they not put a caboose on the end of a train anymore?

Don: No, not for about 15 years.

Brian: Is it because of the weight?

- Don: No, Norfolk Southern downsized and that's one crew they eliminated was the caboose crew.
- Allison: And what was the caboose crews' role?
- Don: Originally, that's where some would sleep while they went across the country.
- Allison: I swear I've seen some in the last 15 years??
- Don: And you could wave at the guys on the back, and they would just wave.
- Brian: And also, there was the necessity of the white on the tail of the train just for visibility's sake and that would be something else that was important.
- Don: Have you ever been to Sanitary to eat? Have any of you eaten there?
- Leah: I mean, I can't think of a better name for a restaurant than the Sanitary Café.
- Don: Back there in that back room there is a fork-like thing. Have you seen it? It's a fork-like thing that the guy in the caboose used to pull messages. That's what they would stick in the ground, and he would use it to snatch and pull it from the ground.
- Leah: Well, at night, in my head when I think of a caboose...used to be the Presidents would ...
- Brian: Right, that's where whistle stops were...
- Leah:go from sea to shining sea and that was the big thing that the train would stop and everybody would....that was before my time. But in my head that's what I see the "wave to the caboose" and kids running behind that train, waving, cause it was such a big deal.
- Don: And they use to go...where we use to live, at Christmas, they would go through the coal camps and throw candy and stuff out, and the kids would chase the caboose.
- Brian: That was a joy that is gone, you know? The town that my father grew up in called Hornell, NY right in the middle of the state used to be where all the passenger cars were made and maintained. And there was one of those giant roundhouse things like there is in Dudley? And it was just a fascinating town, but by the time I came along, it

was dead; that industry was gone. And all there were was these great stories, and here we are in this writing class, right? You know, and how many of us are remembering stoorieees and stuff because you can't go see it anymore?

This talk revealed how the teachers contributed and built knowledge about the subject of trains. The initial question I asked, "Do they not put a caboose on the end of a train anymore?" shifted the conversation by inviting others to engage and share their knowledge and experiences. Don, who grew up in a West Virginia coalmining town, accepted the invitation and immediately began sharing his insights, based on personal experiences, as to why the caboose no longer existed. Don's insights led Brian and me to ask subsequent questions that elicited more information about trains. Initially, Don contributed the majority of the information on trains; however, approximately halfway through the conversation Brian, drawing primarily from personal experiences as well, contributed to the discussion, allowing him to build on the shared knowledge that had been created to that point. When Leah entered the conversation; however, she drew primarily from background knowledge related to the historical significance of the caboose in relation to the United States presidency. Unlike Don and Brian, Leah did not speak from personal experiences, but rather from her imaginings based on previous knowledge as indicated by phrases such as "Well, at night, in my head when I think of a caboose...", "...that was before my time," and "But, in my head that's what I see." Brian brought the discussion full circle stating, "...how many of us are remembering stoorieees and stuff because you can't go see it anymore?"

Collectively, this episode of talk illustrated how “two or more people use language to combine their intellectual resources in the pursuit of a common task” (Mercer, 2004, p. 139). When reflecting on quotes from the book study, sharing or discussing a piece of writing, or engaging in a writing task, teachers oftentimes moved in and out of talk about specific subjects. In other words, teachers responded authentically to the content of a piece of writing as well as its craft. While the subjects they talked about represented a wide range of topics, such as a train caboose; a compost spreader; family; social media; personality; death; and travel, they illustrated the notion that writers write about topics for which they care. Burke (2003) summarized the importance of personal and social subjects in regard to writing:

When our subjects challenge us, when we care about them, we write better. We must be able to make a subject our own in some sense so that we may, through our writing, enter into it and say something intelligent about it. (p.35)

According to Fletcher (1996b) the physical world directly impacts a large majority of our writing and topics of our conversations; therefore, sharing knowledge and experiences about specific topics became a part of the repertoire of the Writing Collaborative, adding cohesion to the community.

Writing and writers. The main objective for this study was to explore how teachers made sense of writing and themselves as writers and the implications for issues of writing and writing instruction. In order to do that, the opportunity for engagement had to present itself so that the teachers could “invest themselves in communities of practice in the process of approaching a subject matter” (Wenger, 1998, p. 271). By

initiating the construction of the community, I provided opportunities for the teachers to engage in discursive practices that would support their sense making of writing and exploration of their writer identities. To that end, teachers shared knowledge and beliefs about writing and writers throughout the collaborative sessions. Teachers' conversations relative to the craft of writing and writers included the writing process, writing styles, writing techniques, writing resources and themselves as writers as they responded to the share practices.

As the collaborative sessions progressed, data revealed that teachers felt more comfortable talking about writing from a personal perspective rather than a general one as evidenced by the use of personal pronouns in the teachers' talk. The use of personal pronouns such as "I," "me," or "we" were one indication of how teachers saw themselves as writers and what it meant to write within the collaborative. In this section, I present two examples that represented the ways in which teachers positioned themselves as writers by sharing their knowledge and beliefs about writing.

During session three, teachers engaged in a quickwrite in which they explored the questions "Is it important to be a reader in order to be a writer? Is who you are as a reader reflected in who you are as a writer? Are these identities related?" After introducing the quickwrite, teachers spent ten minutes reflecting on these questions in their writer's notebook. Below I present an episode of talk in which Wes and Leah shared similar personal knowledge and beliefs about the relationship between reading and writing. From their perspective, being a reader provides models or mentor texts for writing.

Wes: For me, I said I do think it is important to be a reader in order to write. I think to write well you kinda need an example, an inspiration to draw from because why would you want to write if you have not seen good writing? If you don't know, man, I read this book and it's absolutely amazing, and I want to write like that. Then what's your motivation to write like that? My understanding is that most of the time you see someone else's writing and you want to do that. I wish I could do that. Not necessarily sure I've seen a lot of bleed over between what I read and how I write. Those things I know are definitely related, and I've gone back and seen where I tried to do something like this, but in terms of specifics of how they relate for me, I'm not quite so certain.

Leah: I simply said I don't think it's a prerequisite that you have to be a reader to be a writer. But I am like Will, though, I don't know how you write if you don't have any models to go by. I mean, I wrote a question to myself, "Is it content or writing style that I like?" Because, I read from *Fifty Shades* to Edgar Allen Poe. And I like Jack London. It just depends on me. Sometimes it is style cause I love how he writes. I wouldn't want to write like *Fifty Shades*. You know, it's like watching a TV show that's mindless or something.

Throughout his comments Wes reflected on how being a reader provides models for writing, concluding that reading and writing are connected. In doing so, he implied that reading good writing motivates someone to write. He even questioned the motivation for writing of those who are not readers, when he asked, "...why would you want to write if you have not seen good writing?" Here he implied that reading good text is motivation for writing. What is interesting about his stretch of talk is the mixture of second and first person indicated by the pronouns "you" and "your," and "I," "me," and "my", respectively. In using "me" and "I" in his opening statement, he positioned himself as a reader, one who believes that being a reader is a prerequisite for being a writer. However, his speech shifted to second person as he reflected on reading serving as

models for one's writing, indicating that this was not necessarily a personal practice for him. Phrases like "you kinda need an example," "what's your motivation," "you see someone else's writing," and "you want to do that," seemed to distance Wes from the practice of using models. Wes confirmed this distancing when he admitted he had not seen a lot of "bleed over" from what he reads to what he writes, despite having "gone back and seen where I tried to do something like this." As a whole, Wes's dialogue illustrated what Danielewicz (2001) defined as reflexivity, "the act of self-conscious consideration" (p. 155). She elaborated further:

It involves a person's active analysis of past situations, events, products, with the inherent goals of critique and revision for the explicit purpose of achieving an understanding that can lead to change in thought or behavior. (p. 156)

Reflexive thinking allowed Wes to review himself as a reader and writer in relation to others in the collaborative (Danielwicz, 2001) and consider the relationship reading and writing held for him.

Leah's personal pronoun use, in comparison to Wes, revealed more about her writing identities in relation to reading. In her response, Leah positioned herself in opposition with Wes when she stated she didn't think reading was a prerequisite for writing. However, she aligned with Wes by positioning herself as someone who understands the importance of using models when writing, implying that she uses writing models for both content and stylistics. For Leah, the use of models is a part of her writing practice, not only as a writer, but also as a teacher of writing who models for her students. Kelly Gallagher (2011), a renowned writing teacher and staff developer on

writing, stressed the benefits of “closely examining writing from the real world” (p.20), allowing these mentor texts to serve as models. In her first interview, when describing what it meant to be a writer, Leah declared herself a “writer stalker.”

Allison: What do you mean by that?

Leah: If there’s a writer or anybody coming to Barnes & Noble or here or anywhere, I stalk them. I go and watch and listen to what they have to say. Because I just...

Leah’s comments here and subsequent ones from the interview indicated that she “stalks” professional writers to learn their craft, acquire information, and gain sparks of ideas. In analyzing Leah’s talk in these segments, her use of the pronoun “I” turned the attention to herself, revealing the negotiation of identity, specifically writer identities, through dialogic exchange.

In this second example of the ways in which teachers of the collaborative shared knowledge and beliefs about writing, Brian, during an inkshedding, discussed the process he used to compose his piece in response to the “Power of Words” writing task from session six. In the excerpt below, he explained in detail how sometimes his use of writing techniques was unintentional and without awareness.

Brian: Have you guys noticed this is an acrostic?

Wes: No, I didn’t. (Leah shakes her head no as well.)

Brian: This entire title goes right down the side.

Wes: That’s very cool.

Brian: I titled it first. Then I said, “Ok, I’ve done this to my students before. I am going to suffer as I have made them suffer.” So, I

made it a big ole acrostic. That's what was hard that way. It really made me think more about rhythm; whether I'm using...like I don't intentionally alliterate, but I do it all the time. But then I go, "Oh, look at those ends." You know? Or something like that.

In this segment of the discussion, Brian positioned himself as a confident writer, one who invites a challenge. He also positioned himself and his students in relationship to one another when he stated, "Ok, I've done this to my students before. I am going to suffer as I have made them suffer." This illustrated his identity as a teacher of writing and his understanding that "teachers who write persistently have several advantages over those who don't. Not the least of these is the recognition of the problems involved in writing – in short, a recognition of the difficulties of writing" (Suderman, 1977, p. 357). By imposing a challenging writing task on himself, Brian was able to empathize with his students and the writing tasks he assigns them. In reflecting on his process, he considered his writing approach, styles and techniques for creating the poem. He explained to Wes and Leah how he developed the title first, then made each line fit what he wanted to say. This process made him think more about the structure and rhythm of his writing. He also claimed that he did not always use alliteration intentionally; it is not until he goes back to his draft that he even recognizes that he used it. Brian's self-discovery about his own writing process and use of techniques was important to his identities and contributions as a member of the Writing Collaborative. The community enabled and supported his meaning making about his practice of writing and identities as a writer (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2001). In turn, his writer discourses contributed to the building of a community of writers (Dix, 2012).

These few examples illustrated the types of discussions teachers had around writing and themselves as writers. The use of personal pronouns, “I,” “me,” and “my,” became identity markers, indicating when teachers were engaged in identity work. Positioning within the community of practice also offered ways to examine how particular practices facilitated specific types of writer identities (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000). Given that writing is a social process, the Writing Collaborative provided spaces for sharing and dialogue (Lieberman & Wood, 2003) that supported the teachers’ mutual engagement and negotiations of writing and writers. In this sense, the discourse of writing became part of the repertoire of the community and used by the teachers to “express their forms of membership and their identities as members” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83).

Narrate stories. While this study is not framed in narrative inquiry, it was important to understand how personal storytelling facilitated and became a resource for the negotiations of meaning about writing and writer identities within the Writing Collaborative. As noted by Ivanič (1998), “all our writing is influenced by our life-histories,” (p. 181) rooted in our experiences and interactions with people and texts around us. Thus, too, are the personal stories we tell (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009). “Identity and language are linked through personal narratives and life stories” (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p.112); as individuals we communicate verbally and in written form stories of who we are and our lived experiences as a way to construct our identities. According to Davies and Harré (1990), we position others and ourselves in the process of telling stories. The discourses the teachers used to articulate their stories and

experiences, particularly in the context of writing and writing instruction, became, in essence, a narration of their identities (Bausch, 2010; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009).

Episodes of storytelling, both personal and professional, were common in most of the talk teachers engaged in during the Writing Collaborative sessions. Even prior to and immediately following the sessions, the teachers gathered for informal talk, much of it framed in the context of their personal and teaching lives. During the writing sessions, teachers engaged in storytelling as a natural flow of conversation whether they were prompted to talk about themselves, for example, through participant introductions, writing tasks, or questioning that prompted personal information, or not. The following examples of talk illustrated the ways in which the teachers used storytelling as a resource of community coherence, which became a part of the Collaborative's practice.

During session three in the sharing of quotes from our book study, Mindy responded to a quote Wes shared about how memories are stored in special places of our lives. In her reply, she reflected on finding lost treasures by narrating a personal story about her grandmother's sacred bible and her death, in doing so she was positioned by others relative to her writer identities. However, Mindy negotiated a new position by resisting the one made available to her (Davies & Harré, 1990) through the following conversation.

| | |
|--------|--|
| Mindy: | I did the same quote and I could picture somebody like turning up...you always find that lost treasure or something you've been looking for when you change the couch cushions or reach down in the couch or lift it up and you always find that stuff. And, it also reminded me...it reminded me sometimes things get lost in couch cushions or books and it brought back this memory when after my grandma died we were looking and cleaning out her house. My |
|--------|--|

mom grabbed her bible cause it was a bible her sister had given her, so my dad wanted to give it back to my aunt. When we were looking at it something fell out, and it was the bulletin from the last Sunday she went to church before she fell and hit her head, and she was never right after that. But the month and day on the bulletin was also the month and day in which she died. Obviously not the year, but I just thought that was hmmmmm.

Margaret: That's freaky

Larissa: Yeah, that's worth writing about.

Mindy: I don't know...that was just strange and yet, meaningful.

Margaret: As our lesson that Allison sent us about talk...think about all the things we could write about just because we've talked and what it is provoking in our memories that we want to write down.

Mindy: Yeah, and that's something that I had really...I mean it's still here, but I had just really forgotten about it, and reading that quote just made me think of that.

Allison: A whole novel....another Nicholas Sparks

Mindy's brief story about finding her grandmother's bible and its memorable connection to her death, was prompted by or came to mind because of the quote, exemplifying how memories live in special places. Subsequently, Larissa positioned Mindy as a writer when she suggested that her story was worthy material for a piece of writing. Mindy resisted the idea that the story of her grandmother's bible was worth writing about and seemed to put the subject to rest when she replied, "I don't know..." Mindy's intention of narrating the story of her grandmother, it seemed, was to affirm the idea that stories do reside in special places of our memory. Hearing the quote from our book study simply revived this memory. However, Margaret and I continued the "you should write about it" storyline Larissa adopted and provided more invitations for Mindy to conform (Davies &

Harré, 1990). For example, Margaret pointed out how talk is a motivation for writing and elicits potential writing topics, specifically those evoked by memories. In an effort to position her as a writer with a unique story to tell, I compared her, with sincerity, to Nicholas Sparks for whom she had previously expressed admiration.

Mindy did not take up the storyline. Speakers who are positioned by others may not take up the storyline to which they were invited for a lot of different reasons (Davies & Harré, 1990). Despite the affordances of the Writing Collaborative, Mindy's positioning about her identities as a writer; remained unchanged in this particular dialogic exchange.

Teachers' narration of stories was not limited to their personal lives, but also included stories about their classrooms and writing instruction. Given that the Writing Collaborative's purpose was to investigate how teachers make sense of writing and themselves as writers, it is worth noting that sharing stories of their classrooms or pedagogy did not occur as often as personal storytelling. With that said, teachers shared classroom stories about specific writing strategies or tasks they had implemented, even bringing student samples to share with the group. Margaret, for example, shared an integrated poetry assignment on Tupac Shakur she created and samples of student poetry that were generated as a result. On many occasions, Brian shared stories of his students' academic progress, his instructional practices and students' responses to specific assignments. Wes also contributed stories about his classroom, particularly those related to poetry assignments, students' journal topics, and writer's notebooks his students kept.

While Don's personal storytelling occurred less frequently than others in the collaborative, he narrated classroom stories and shared writing and reading resources on many occasions. In fact, in addition to the humor he interjected, a majority of his engagement in the collaborative consisted of stories about his students or their writing. In session four, he quoted a line from our book study then proceeded to share in great detail a creative writing assignment he used to do with his students.

Don: He [Fletcher] repeats himself on page 52 when it says, "Sight is a crucially important tool to a writer. But the senses of smell, touch, sound, and taste are just as important." I know I use to ...and I know I am nowhere near being Teacher of the Year, but one of the things I used to do for creative writing when I did them was I made my kids put their heads down and get it as quiet as I could. I would ask them to think about the happiest time in their life, and then I'd ask them, "What do you hear? What do you see? What do you smell? What do you taste? and What do you feel?" Then without talking, after...and I'd give them like, maybe 30 seconds to think about each question. I would have them raise up and write what they were experiencing with their senses. And I always got a pretty good, uh, always got a pretty good paper out of it cause they actually had to think what...

Brian: (breaking in) When they are the topic...

Don: Excuse me?

Brian: When they were the topic they could write!

Through his narration of this writing assignment, Don positioned himself as a teacher of writing and one who gets good writing results from his students specific to creative writing. Asked during an interview if he was a writer he commented, "I know how to write," but "knowing how to write and being a writer that somebody wants to read is two completely different things." Identifying himself as someone who knows how to write reinforced his teacher of writing identity. However, by prefacing his story with the

phrase, “I am nowhere near being Teacher of the Year,” Don indicated his reservation about being a good teacher of writing. Furthermore, it illustrated the ways in which comparing ourselves to others is constructive of self. “The process of comparing ourselves to others allows us to discover similarities and differences. Both categories yield useful information to anyone who is engaged in developing an identity” (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 50). In the last turn, Brian validated Don’s creative writing task as student-centered when he interjected, “When they were the topic, they could write.”

Summary

By *sharing knowledge and beliefs* about topics of interest, writers, and writing, as well as *narrating personal stories* about their lives inside and outside the classroom, teachers built a repertoire of resources to facilitate their exploration of writing and themselves as writers. As a result of their interactions and engagement in the community, teachers created joint ways to discuss writing and themselves as writers. This shared communication manifested itself in the interesting topics they discussed, their knowledge and beliefs about writing they shared, and the stories they told about their personal lives and classrooms. Thus, the book study, writer’s notebook, writing tasks, and inkshedding that framed each Writing Collaborative session served in the development of a shared repertoire for building knowledge and fostering identity work within the Writing Collaborative.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the practices that shaped the Writing Collaborative through the characteristics of practice that form a community: mutual

engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) to explain how the teachers' responses to the share practices served to bring coherence to the community.

Understanding the practices in which teachers engaged helped to explain how the Writing Collaborative was constructed and how these practices facilitated membership in the newly formed community. Data revealed seven types of practices exhibited through sharing and the teachers' responses to sharing. Although I presented them individually and demonstrated how each share practice and its elements supported community building, ultimately the practices were interwoven and served one another, providing coherence to the community Wenger (1998). The seven share practices were interactive, occurring within and across the sessions and also within and across stretches of talk.

While some practices emerged early and were common in all eight sessions, for example *praise and encourage*, other practices like *share knowledge and beliefs* predominated much later as teachers became more comfortable with and accountable to one another. Because language played a central role in the Writing Collaborative, it was through talk that the share practices were evident. As such, individual conversations often reflected the teachers' multiple engagements in the seven practices revealed by the data.

It was challenging to present the share practice data in isolation without alluding to the ways in which the teachers made sense of writing and themselves as writers. It was through participation in the practices that meanings were made, learning occurred, and identities were shaped. Likewise, examining teachers' negotiations of meanings about writing and the ways in which they positioned themselves or were positioned by others as writers through conversations provided a clearer sense of the practices that defined the

community (Horne, 2007; 2012). In the Writing Collaborative, the practice of sharing helped teachers to build the community and also supported them in making meaning of their experiences and shaping their identities as writers. In the next chapter, I examine the teachers' meaning making about writers and writing that made visible the enacted identities associated with the share practices of the Writing Collaborative. I present data that revealed the teachers' identities in practice by analyzing the negotiated meanings teachers made about writers, writing, and themselves as writers.

CHAPTER V

CONSTRUCTING MEANING ABOUT WRITERS AND WRITING

One of the things that happen when you give yourself permission to start writing is that you start thinking like a writer.

(Lamott, 1994, p.136)

We do not know what we will say until we say it and so we discover, by writing, what we have seen, what we have learned, what we have lived and what it means.

(Murray, 2004, p. 107)

In the previous chapter I examined the practices in which teachers engaged that served to build and shape the Writing Collaborative. These practices signified the ways in which teachers mutually engaged in the community, pursued a joint enterprise, and developed a shared repertoire for uncovering meanings about writing and themselves as writers. The practices were foundational to the formation of the Writing Collaborative; more importantly, the practices facilitated the meanings teachers made about writing and the ways in which they positioned themselves or were positioned by others as writers.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the meanings teachers made about writers and writing and the writer identities that shaped and were shaped by the community within the Writing Collaborative. To that end, I address the following sub-question:

- b. What meanings do teachers make about writers, writing and themselves as writers within the Writing Collaborative?

As mentioned in chapter four, as the facilitator of the community, I introduced several structures and practices to the community that assisted in its formation. These structures, coupled with the share practices that emerged from the community, played a major role in the meanings teachers made about writing and themselves as writers. Additionally, the agenda of each Writing Collaborative session provided a space for the teachers' process of negotiating meaning about writing and themselves as writers. As teachers participated in activities and talk about writing they produced new and nuanced meanings that served to "extend, redirect, dismiss, reinterpret, modify, or confirm – in a word, negotiate anew – the histories of meanings of which they are part" (Wenger, 1998, p. 53). As members of the community, teachers interactively contributed to the negotiation of meaning about writing. In doing so, the teachers' identities as writers and the world of the Writing Collaborative shaped each other. It was through the negotiation of meanings fostered by participation in the share practices that teachers' identities shaped and were shaped by the community. Wenger (1998) described this reciprocal relation that reveals the essence of who we are by comparing it to the mountain and the river.

The world as we shape it, and our experience as the world shapes it, are like the mountain and the river. They shape each other, but they have their own shape. They are reflections of each other, but they have their own existence, in their own realms. They fit around each other, but they remain distinct from each other. They cannot be transformed into each other, yet they transform each other. The river only carves and the mountain only guides, yet in their interaction, the carving becomes the guiding and the guiding becomes the carving. (P.71)

In negotiating the meaning of writing and what it means to be a writer, the teachers enacted writer identities that were the results of their own writing experiences and interactions within the community.

This chapter presents data that emerged during analysis to explore the meanings teachers made about writers, writing and their identities as writers. Data revealed how the community's shared practices supported teachers in making meaning of writers and writing and shaping their identities as writers. I present the findings categorically in order to describe the meanings teachers made about writers and writing and how these meanings contributed to the shaping of their identities as writers. I use detailed descriptions to present the overall categories of meanings teachers collectively made about writers and writing. To illustrate each category of meaning, I use examples of raw data, specifically episodes of talk, from which each category emerged. Additionally, I draw from professional writers and practitioners in the field to build a comprehensive understanding of the collective meanings teachers made about writers and writing. Professional writers and those entrenched in writing and the teaching of writing have explored the writing process and can authenticate the experiences of other writers, particularly novices. These experts recognize that being a writer is an evolving and continuous process, one that involves struggles, challenges, experimentation and failure (Murray, 2004). Moreover, they understand "what it means to develop as a writer, what happens when people write, and how they learn to get better at it" (NWP & Nagin, 2003, p. 22). Taking into account the practices and experiences of authentic writers served to

contextualize the teachers' meaning making and to provide a backdrop for discussing the writer identities that emerged.

Teachers' Meaning-Making of Writers and Writing

The negotiation of meaning is the central process involved in the practices of a community. "Meaning exists neither in us, nor in the world, but in the dynamic relation of living in the world" (Wenger, 1998, p.54). The figured world of the Writing Collaborative provided a space for teachers to negotiate meanings of writers and writing. Consequently, language, specifically talk, served as the primary means by which teachers constructed meaning. "Every time we talk with someone, we become involved in a collaborative endeavor in which meanings are negotiated and some common knowledge is mobilized" (Mercer, 2000, p.6). The Writing Collaborative provided a space for teachers to share experiences and create individual and joint understandings. Through the review of observation field notes from videotapes of the Writing Collaborative sessions supplemented by teachers' interviews and teachers' writing artifacts, data demonstrated how the community supported teachers in making meaning about writers and writing. Data revealed teachers' meanings about writers and writing clustered around five main categories. Findings included talk about the following: (a) definitions of writers; (b) purposes of writing; (c) writing ideas; (d) writing as a process; and (e) personal aspects of writing. Table 3 depicts the categories of meanings along with brief descriptions teachers made about writers and writing. In this section I discuss the collective meanings teachers generated about writers and writing relevant to the five categories.

Table 9. Summary of Teachers' Collective Meanings of Writers and Writing

| Categories of Meanings | Descriptions of Meanings |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Definitions of Writers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writers are observers, reporters, researchers, artists, and communicators • Writers are accurate, concise, spontaneous, observant, creative, imaginative, empathetic, reflective, and visual |
| Purposes of Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create understanding; document thinking to elicit new ideas • To explore a personal topic of interest • To document current or past events • To recall information, memories • To heal; For therapeutic purposes |
| Writing Ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generated by current and past events, memories, and personal stories • Motivated by talk • Influenced by reading: vocabulary, ideas & opinions |
| Writing as a Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing process (style, technique, organization) varies among writers • Drafting process varies among writers • Writer's block is authentic • Writers emulate others; use models and mentor texts • Sharing writing and providing feedback, although uncomfortable, supports writers |
| Personal Aspects of Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is personally engaging; but requires honesty • Writers relinquish control once their writing is made public • Writing exposes and represents aspects of the self |

Definitions of Writers

The Writing Collaborative served as a space for teachers to negotiate definitions of writers respective of their backgrounds and experiences with writing. The opportunity to negotiate meanings of what it means to be a writer was prompted by the activities and writing tasks of the sessions, but also occurred naturally as teachers talked and wrote about writers and writing. Though each participant defined what it meant to be a writer in his or her own way, commonalities existed within the community. Collectively, the teachers defined writers in a literal and metaphorical sense, describing the varied roles a writer portrays: reporter, observer, researcher, artist, and communicator. “Metaphors are

categories of likeness which people use to organize the data of experience” (Mercer, 2000, p.78). As a discourse, metaphors serve to “create and reinforce personal and professional identities” (Alsup, 2006, p. 147). During the Writing Collaborative sessions, teachers expressed metaphors for writers in a visual, written, and spoken form, reflecting not only their meanings of writers, but also the images they held of themselves (Alsup, 2006) as writers.

For example, Brian and Wes defined writers as reporters and observers, those who take notice or interest in things other may not. In doing so, writers must be observant, accurate, and concise. Murray (2004) referred to the act of observation as “the habit of awareness” in which “I am constantly observing my world, catching, out of the corner of my eye, the revealing detail, hearing what is not said, entering into the skin of others” (p. 24). Brian explained that it is a writer’s calling to observe and report, accurately, “the stuff other people wished they didn’t see.” In doing so, writers are those who expose a truth. His visual representation of a camera and a hammer conveyed his notion of a writer as an observer and accurate reporter. Brian explained further.

I drew a camera and a hammer because when I think about the writers I like, and there’s plenty of writers we don’t like...but the ones I like are accurate. I mean they see the stuff other people wished they didn’t see. Then they are a hammer about it.

Brian also articulated his definition of a writer by reflecting on his own identities as a writer. Here he explained his priorities as a writer, emphasizing that writers need to be good observers in order to have something about which to write.

I suppose this is where I think about myself, you know? I kinda feel like it's my calling to observe and report, and some people don't like to report; they don't want to hear about the truth. They don't want to hear about the elephant in the room.

I think of writers as those who accurately describe even those things people don't want to hear about because they need to be discussed; or at least mentioned. You know? They're like that salt or little piece of sand in an oyster that might become a pearl later; they just kind of put that piece of sand in there and be an irritant for the time being.

Similarly, Wes clarified that writers are observers since they tend to notice things that nobody else sees; "it's more interesting to you than anyone else and probably happens more often to writers." Murray (2004) also confirmed this notion of the writer as observer and reporter stating, "The writer is not only looking for information from which to build a particular piece of writing, but collecting information against the day when it may reveal a subject" (p. 13). In sum, writers possess "the ability to observe details in life" (p.13) and construct writing from "concrete, accurate, sturdy bits of information" (p.13).

In a similar vein, Leah defined writers as researchers. Through research, writers acquire information and ideas for their writing. For Leah, writers are those who collect and share information. Murray (2004) recognized the metaphor of the writer as a researcher as well. He explained that in order to produce ideas, writers must be able to collect information from a variety of sources. "Research, for the writer, includes people as much as books and records" (p. 15). Being a researcher is at the center of an intellectual, writerly life. However, Leah indicated that being a writer – researcher is a learned behavior, not an innate ability.

But I don't think they're born that way. I think it's all research. You know, if you get an idea, or I know if I do, if I get an idea, it's from a spark and then I just start researching and then for some reason information starts pouring.

Interestingly, Leah self-identified as a researcher, but not as a writer. When asked in her first interview if she considered herself a writer Leah replied, "I'm too scattered." She further explained.

Again, I've got the ideas, and I can put down the research. It's just the semantics of it. It's the actual writing that I would have problems. I mean, I want to see an end result today. I'm just a better researcher, not a writer.

In her book *The Writing Life*, Annie Dillard (2009) discussed the parallel between a writer and an artist suggesting, "what happens in the small room between the writer and the work itself...is similar to what happens between a painter and the canvas" (p.56). Teachers also defined writers as artists, using descriptors such as spontaneous, creative, visual, and imaginative. Larissa and Leah, specifically, voiced the notion that writers are artists and even identified themselves as artists and creative persons as opposed to writers. In her first interview, Larissa claimed she was not a writer and shared that others do not see her as a writer either; "They see me more as an artist though, and I think that creativity, regardless if it's writing or painting, all flow from the same area." During the Writing Collaborative, Larissa also suggested that she was an artist, rather than a writer. For example, in analyzing her heart map, she reflected that its organization and content were the result of her artistic side. "I was doing it in a rush and asked myself, 'Why am I putting it in this kind of order?' and I thought, well, that's how my creativity goes. It's all....obscure, I guess? But in the end, it comes together." When asked later what might

have inspired her to create some of the writing pieces such as the heart map Larissa replied,

I think I have inner feelings that I've inhibited that I don't release until my creative juices start flowing, and sometimes I have to go back in these recesses to find out where they're coming from. Sometimes I don't want to go there. So, it comes out creatively, I think.

For Larissa, writing involves creativity and the ability to see one's self and other writers as artists. In her final interview, when asked if she was a writer, Larissa reluctantly replied, "I have my moments." She continued to struggle with identifying herself as a writer, feeling more comfortable describing herself as an artist. "But with art work or with writing or anything like that, when I think of a good writer I think of somebody like Hemingway or Mark Twain or someone like that."

Likewise, Leah described writers as creative, those who draw from unique ideas that appeal to themselves and others. In one collaborative session, she generated discussion about graffiti and its value as written, artistic expression. When asked if others saw her as a writer, Leah replied, "Probably. I'm the creative, idea person." However, in her last interview she did not identify herself as a writer, rather she stated, "I mean, I have ideas. I mean massive, creative ideas for books and ideas that nobody touches, but I'm always scared to start." Larissa and Leah's positioning of themselves as artistic and creative idea people overshadowed presenting themselves as writers.

In his article, "All Children Can Write," Donald Graves (1985) defined writing as "a medium with which people communicate with themselves and with others at other places and times" (p.8). Recognizing one of the most practical purposes of writing,

teachers in the Writing Collaborative defined writers as communicators. Don, Margaret, and Mindy generally defined writers as those with the ability to communicate ideas clearly and concisely in written form, impacting a variety of audiences. Don, in his first interview, when asked to describe what it meant to be a writer, simply stated, “to use the English language correctly and coherently to communicate effectively with others.” In his visual representation of a writer, he articulated a similar definition by illustrating a piece of text with words radiating and spreading across the globe. He described his definition of a writer by stating, “Yeah, it’s just the written word, spread to the world. It doesn’t matter whether it’s the Koran, the Bible, the Magna Carta, the Constitution... whoever writes has the ability to affect everybody.”

Margaret, in her visual representation of a writer, used the metaphor *writing is a building* to illustrate the building tools a writer needs to communicate ideas. “I put a pipe in the sky because you get a thought or an idea it has to come down to you first, then you organize it before putting it out there for others.” Margaret clarified her definition of a writer as a communicator saying that writers “need to be clear, concise, to the point. They need to stay on whatever their topic is. They must clearly state and convey their topic.” According to Margaret, writers must remain focused; “get in, get out and move on.” Mindy seemed to extend Margaret’s definition by describing writers as communicators, expressing that

A writer is somebody who can take the words that are in their mind and get them on paper. Even if it’s not what we would say is a complete sentence or a paragraph, just the fact that you can get what you’re thinking and somewhat put it on the paper somehow in words for you or others to understand.

Making a connection to the quiet students in her classroom, Mindy also reflected that writing is their way of communicating. For students who do not feel comfortable speaking their thoughts and ideas, writing becomes a prime outlet for communicating with themselves and others.

The Writing Collaborative provided an opportunity for teachers to generate and share their meanings of a writer, using both literal and metaphorical language. Through negotiation of these meanings, the definitions of writers that the teachers articulated became reified within the community. Reifying the concept of “writer” as a reporter, an observer, a researcher, an artist, and a communicator shaped the experiences of the teachers and enabled nuanced understandings of what it means to be a writer. Through shared interests about writers and writing, teachers interpreted various definitions of writers. These interpretations cannot be viewed as misunderstandings because “when we are dealing with complex, interesting presentation of ideas, variations in understanding are quite normal” (Mercer, 2000, p. 5) and in “almost every encounter we do not only gain and give information; the joint experience shapes what each participant thinks and says” (p. 6). Therefore, negotiating meaning does not always imply reaching an agreement; rather it is the result of “the engagement of a multiplicity of factors and perspectives” (p. 53).

Purposes of Writing

When a person sits down to write, he or she always has some intended purpose for writing. Whether the task is authentic, such as a written inquiry to a lawn and garden company regarding faulty compost equipment, or mandatory, as in writing assignments

for school or one's job, a writer is motivated by some purpose. In fact, a writer writes for a variety of purposes, some common among writers and some specific to the individual writer. Murray (2004), answering the question "Why write?" cited a variety of reasons for which one writes.

To learn, to describe, and therefore see, to speak and therefore hear, to entertain, to inform, to persuade, to celebrate, to attack, to call attention, to think, to make money, to promote, to advocate, to connect, to relate, to make, to share. (p. 8)

In other words, writing serves a multitude of purposes, professionally and personally (Burke, 2003). "To write is to become a more reflective person. Writing requires and promotes the ability to contemplate and to see aspects of life more clearly" (Grace, 1999, p. 60).

Making meaning about writing, particularly the purposes of writing, was shared among all teachers in the Writing Collaborative. As with Murray, the teachers recognized multiple purposes for writing and articulated them based on their own writing experiences and the experiences shared by others in the community. While the teachers did mention the writing they "have to do," for work or graduate school, the majority of the purposes for writing they discussed was framed in a personal, and sometimes private, context.

To create understanding and document thinking. Most of the teachers understood that writing serves to create and deepen understanding of a topic, idea, or issue. By documenting one's thinking, a writer creates and discovers meaning. Mindy argued this is particularly true in relation to the comprehension of text. She explained

that writing is a way to comprehend what we have read whether through note taking, summarizing, or jotting down ideas. “Sometimes for reading we have to write to understand what we’ve read...just jot down notes to yourself to understand what you’ve read.” Similarly, Don suggested that having students write about an issue or topic prior to reading helps them to make connections and glean understanding. He shared a writing lesson his students completed prior to reading an excerpt from a diary called “The Pillow Book.”

Last week we did a writing assignment from it. It’s a diary that was published that a lady wrote and it talks about how...It’s very private, but that’s been published. And we had a good time with one of the things we wrote about is how would you feel if your private thoughts were published? And that was our journal topic that day. They wrote about that then read her private thoughts. We talked about how they felt when their brothers read their diaries. It really helped the students understand the character better and what she was experiencing.

Additionally, Larissa recognized that documenting her thoughts often leads to new discoveries. “It’s like when I get started I have one thing in mind, but then it goes someplace else. And where it goes, it’s like astonishing sometimes.” She explained that in order to make new discoveries, one has to put pen to paper and begin writing. In this way, writing is thinking and generating understanding. “Writing is one of the most disciplined ways of making meaning and one of the most effective methods we can use to monitor our own thinking” (Murray, 2004, p.3).

To explore topics of interest. Brian shared that writing allows a person to explore a topic of interest, topics for which one has a natural curiosity. “I think all of us have things we dwell on; I call them ‘brain worms.’ Stuff you can’t get out of your

head.” Fletcher (1996a) recounted similar experiences of stories that simply refused to get out of his head, prompting him to write about them. Writing about his “brain worms,” such as the long forgotten caboose in his poem “Wave to the Caboose,” helped Brian to explore a topic personally interesting to him, but also to “think about things that disappear and they’re very likely not going to come back.” Writing to explore a topic of interest served an authentic purpose for Brian. According to Fletcher, “As a writer you need to know what you wonder about because this often leads to your best writing” (p. 21).

To document current and past events. Several teachers expressed that one purpose of writing is to document current and past events, a type of historical data or living history. With a sense of urgency, Mindy, Margaret, and Leah expressed the notion that writing is a way to preserve history; writing as living history is reflective of our daily lives and should be created for others to read. In response to a book study quote about documenting a relative’s last words, Mindy discussed her desire to document stories and anecdotes about her parents to share later with future generations.

I’m always asking my parents about their childhood and things that happen to them. They remember some things, but then they say, “Oh, that’s been so long ago...” So, that kind of sparks interest for me to maybe start to write some of those kinds of things down so I can pass them down to my children and grandchildren. That just really stuck in my mind.

Mindy, who married the summer following the Writing Collaborative, realized an authentic purpose for maintaining a living family history.

Margaret, sharing a similar idea in response to Brian's story of his traumatic head injury and loss of childhood memories, stated, "I think that people, particularly our generation, need to leave a living history back behind for our children." Leah also expressed the importance of using writing to document a person's history. She articulated in great detail her obsession to create a variety of lists and their purposes and how they reflected a type of autobiography, particularly her calendar lists.

You can even go by mine and see, "doctor's appointment. 6 months pregnant. We decided to name him Bryce." ALL of it is in those calendars. But now, I don't do that. I don't keep a calendar like that. But my calendars use to be my lists, and I am actually cleaning out my room and I opened up my very first one I did when I started teaching at SMS. I started teaching 7th grade and Bryce was in the 7th grade then so, it's been a while. So, I found a list "Call so and so's mother" cause I'm not putting up with this crap any longer!" So, I even leave myself lists that are detailed for me. Like I don't know what I'm talking about. I am a list, list, list maker. My lists tell everything about me, and what was going on in my life at the time.

Leah, an incessant list maker, concluded that lists could be a documentary of one's life.

Interestingly, Brian shared that he had maintained a "Nothing Book" since about 1977. When he was a freshman in college, his parents gave him a paperback, blank book that later became a journal which he filled with songs, drawings, and snippets of writings. He recalled how these journals now serve as autobiographical timepieces, providing a documented glimpse into his life.

I've had some pretty profound things happen to me over these 54 years that I'm glad that I documented in some way at the time so that I can go back and observe it. I have blank books that are just full of stuff that go back 30 years and some of it's just silliness, you know what I mean? It's just stupid. But there are things in there; there are pearls in there amongst the gumballs, you know, and I'm glad I've kept that stuff. And I'm glad that my children have versions of that kind of

autobiographical collection, I guess you could call it, that both their mom and I do. My wife writes, too. And so there's a very big search for meaning in this documenting.

The Writing Collaborative supported teachers in making meaning of their writing experiences that served to document significant events in their lives. Although Mindy and Margaret entertained the idea of documenting or having others document significant events for future generations, neither of them shared specific examples from their own experiences. Brian and Leah, however, added new insights to these meanings by sharing specific “autobiographical” examples from their own writing that illustrated the ways in which, “a single detail can sometimes give a window into a person’s whole life” (Fletcher, 1996a, p. 24). Therefore, the collaborative provided a space for teachers to deepen their understandings and shape the experiences of its members.

To recall information and memories. Teachers also facilitated and engaged in discussions about the practical purpose of writing in their lives. Writing to remember and recall information, including significantly held memories, was a natural routine for most of the teachers. Margaret expressed how she used sticky notes on a daily basis to help her recall important tasks and items on her “to do” list. “I am always thinking, making a list, making notes, whatever, and things I need to do.” In a later session, Margaret emphasized the importance of her lists that serve as daily reminders, describing her obsession with sticky notes as “weird.”

Probably the weirdest thing I do with lists is I put them on my steering wheel. I have sticky notes, and if they are *really* important I go out in the middle of the night, wherever, and put it on my steering wheel or I'll put it on my speedometer. I have to do that...otherwise I won't remember.

Wes, speaking from a teacher's perspective, claimed a similar need to write in order to recall information, explaining that his lists usually consist of assignments to be graded, lesson plans to be prepared, or parents to call. Part of the satisfaction of making a list is completing it. "I keep my lists on my desk so I can mark each item off as I complete it."

Larissa, on the other hand, described herself as a note taker rather than a list maker. "I don't really do lists. I make notes and jot them down, but I don't do lists." Teachers also discovered how writing could serve to recall and document significant memories.

Margaret shared how writing the "Where I'm From" poem elicited fond memories of growing up and living with her grandparents. "Yeah, but it made you feel good as you wrote it. It brought back good memories; it brought back good thoughts as I wrote this and made me think of my family and all those things." Brian discussed how writing about memories helped him acquire new information about people in his past that he was not aware at the time.

And all of a sudden things go, "Wow!" and you get this piece of information that kind of turns the prism as it were and I end up looking at that person a little differently....maybe better? Maybe I'm surprised at something I've learned that I never suspected and things like that, you know? Sometimes it's a little additional information that can turn the prism and make what you thought was a concrete understanding of something change really, really quickly because of something someone has added to your memory that happened at the time you didn't know.

For the teachers in the collaborative, writing served as a tool for remembering information that guides and necessitates their daily lives. Teachers also concluded that writing, regardless of the genre, is a medium for recalling memories, evoking new responses and providing new insights for the writer. Although the teachers varied in their

writing approaches, engagement in writing helped them to remember important information and recall memorable events in their lives.

To heal. Finally, teachers' meanings regarding the purposes of writing were personal in nature. Particularly, Margaret indicated that writing is therapeutic, helping her to work through issues or problems she may be experiencing in her life. Margaret, who self-identified as a personal, rather than professional writer, professed that without writing, she could not function. Specifically, she discussed how she uses journal writing to help her cope with problems in her personal life. In her first interview, she expressed the success she experiences from her own writing.

Well, it's a healing for me. It helps me heal. It's better than drugs. But being able to put down my feelings and know that it's my domain or my space and nobody looks at it, it really helps and that way I can help me cope with some things that go on in my life. Without being able to do that, it would stay bottled up. You know, some people scream, some people run, some people drink, I write. That's how I get it together. And especially I'll do lots of pros and cons. Here's my pro side, here's my con side, which outweighs the other when I really have a dilemma. But when I came to the crossroads of my life with big problems, writing was my way out.

Writing as therapy is a personal as well as a physical act for Margaret. She confessed that she rarely goes back and reads her entries, ultimately destroying a journal once it is filled. Physically destroying her journals, she explained, was a significant part of the healing process.

That's right, I write to heal. And I will destroy them and after a couple of months things have changed or life has changed and you go back and destroy it. I have just learned at my age that you can't change things. It is what it is and you have to deal with the present and then the future. You can never go back and change the past. So, why bring back hardships or pain?

Writing down her thoughts helps Margaret to deal with reality, and destroying them later is her way of “getting rid of baggage.” Fletcher (1996a) described this type of writing with the metaphor “writing-as-lifejacket: the writing you do because your heart will burst if you don’t write it” (p.98). Margaret summed it up well stating, “Yes. It’s the idea that writing can release you.”

Negotiating meanings of writing reflected the ways in which teachers generated knowledge, understanding, and purposes for writing. While no one teacher made claims about all of the writing purposes generated among the community, the process of negotiation provided a context for teachers to make sense about the various purposes for which people write.

Writing Ideas

Most writers do not have to search very far for writing ideas; they can be found in the world around them (Fletcher, 1996a, 1996b; Murray, 2004). Seed ideas (Fletcher, 1996a) have the potential to become novels, essays, articles, diary entries, poems, letters or they may sit in a warm place, slowly incubating waiting for the perfect time to germinate. “All we see or hear connects with something else, passing through our unconscious and conscious until it ripens into a subject that is ready to write” (Murray, 2004, p. 11). Writers acquire ideas internally from within their own experiences and externally from the suggestions or encouragement of others. How writers get their ideas for their work was a focus of the talk among the teachers throughout the Writing Collaborative.

Generated by events, memories, and personal stories. Each member of the community contributed to the meanings made about writers' ideas for writing. For example, several suggested that writers generate ideas from current and past events, memories and personal stories. Brian explained how he uses bulleted notes to document memories that later serve as writing reminders or mental placeholders. "I do that all the time. I tell my wife, 'Give me something to write on because I've got to get this down.' Cause it isn't gonna stay up here in my head; there's too much mess going on up here. I got to write it down somewhere." Documented memories provided a variety of writing ideas for Brian, but more importantly an avenue for building family relationships and connections with others. "It just further stressed the importance of documenting because you never know, dementia; things happen when we get old. I do wish there were family members who had something like that because I would like to have known them better once they were gone and stuff." Margaret acknowledged that experiencing death, particularly of a family member, makes for valuable writing ideas. In her poem "Would I?" she fictitiously pondered the many choices she might have made differently had she known it was her last day to live. She explained, "But that was one...in my heart I talked about when you get older, like at my age, death becomes more a part of your life. I lost a brother not too long ago. I don't become afraid of death. So...I write about it." Additionally, as I discussed in Chapter 4, teachers reflected on the ways in which personal stories make great fodder for writing.

Motivated by talk. Given that the Writing Collaborative functioned primarily around talk, it was not surprising that teachers recognized the importance of talk as a

generator of ideas for writing. Larissa voiced the idea that talk says a lot about a person. Listening to a person's talk reveals personality traits and insights into their interests. "Many writers find that human talk provides crucial raw materials for their writing" (Fletcher, 1996a, p.65). Once during the book study discussion, Margaret proclaimed to the group, "Think about all the things we could write about just because we've talked and what it is provoking in our memories that we want to write down." Using talk as starting points for writing ideas seemed an important aspect of the teachers' understanding of writing.

Influenced by reading. Interestingly, teachers recognized the role reading plays in writing. Teachers professed that writing ideas are influenced by what a person reads, including topic, style and craft. In her book *Notebook Know How: Strategies for the Writer's Notebook*, Aimee Buckner (2005) addressed the need for writers to pay close attention to the books they read because "when writers read, they take a different stance toward the book than 'regular' people do" (p.56). Likewise, "When writers read something very good they want to write. It is a curious reaction" (Murray, 2004, p. 87). Although teachers were not in agreement that in order to be a writer one must be a reader, most did acknowledge that reading affects their writing in several ways. For Brian, reading supplies and increases the vocabulary he uses in his writing. Affectionately known as the "word man" among the members of the collaborative, Brian claimed, "Being a reader is definitely reflective in what I write because that's where I get my vocabulary. And I really love 'out there' vocabulary." Leah, who did not believe that teachers needed to be writers in order to teach writing, felt strongly, however, that

teachers should be readers. She proclaimed that possessing strong vocabulary knowledge, acquired from reading, supports teachers in the teaching of writing and provides information to be used in writing. “I think if you’re a good reader you can teach writing because then you’ll be... you can go in any direction.” In terms of her own writing, reading affected Leah’s choice and use of vocabulary. Reading also served to challenge Brian’s opinions about specific issues, broadening his scope and contributing to his writing.

In reading, I find that some of my viewpoints and opinions get challenged and the box gets a little more open due to something that I’ve read. So, if my views change, anything I try to communicate is going to contain those views. Also, I find myself always “analogizing” if there is such a word as that. I am referring to things that I’ve read as a support or a buttress or something about a point I’m trying to make when I write.

Wes, as described in chapter 4, declared a definite connection between reading and writing; however, for himself, specifically, he was indecisive as to how his reading impacts his writing. As a conscious reader and writer, Wes admitted to have reflected in the past on the issue of using his reading as a resource for his writing, developing an awareness he planned to investigate further.

Like many literacy experts in the field (Atwell, 1998; Burke, 2003; Gallagher, 2011; Routman, 2005), the teachers in the Writing Collaborative recognized the interconnected relationship of reading and writing, particularly how reading creates new possibilities for their own writing pieces. The teachers came to understand that reading provides an avenue “to hear the voices of the best writers in our language” (Murray, 2004, p.87) and “to read those who are working in the same territories” (p.87) as a way to

“see the geography of possibility” (p.88) which surrounds their own writing. In essence, reading served as a tool for improving the teachers’ writing.

Writing as a Process

Meanings about writers and writing for which teachers contributed the most dealt with the processes writers use when they write. Rief (2003a) pointed out that writers move through the writing process differently and use different composing styles to create a piece of writing. Murray (2004) agreed that there is no one way to compose a piece of writing. Most writing experts acknowledge that the writing process is recursive, allowing writers an opportunity to plan, draft, revise, edit (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001; Flowers & Hayes, 1981) and publish their work. Most importantly, “The writing process is organic. It grows and changes during the act of writing” (Murray, 2004, p. 23). While teachers agreed that writing is a recursive process, they varied on their descriptions of what that process looks like for the individual writer. In short, the teachers recognized that writers have individual styles and vary how they approach the writing process. Margaret advised, “Reflect your personal style! Everybody’s got his or her own way of doing it. It’s my way to be different than somebody else, but it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s wrong. The biggest thing is just taking the plunge!”

Drafting. All of the teachers expressed that writers, regardless of their skills or level of experience, have their own process they use to compose a piece of text. One part of the process that generated discussion among the teachers in the collaborative was that of drafting. Though teachers recognized drafting as an essential part of the writing process, they varied on their approach and philosophy of drafting. As mentioned in the

last chapter, Don and Brian indicated they rarely compose more than one draft of a piece of writing. For them, revision is not always necessary. Murray (2004) agreed, “Some pieces of writing are so well planned and rehearsed that they work the first time” (p.60). While Brian seized opportunities to revise his work, for the most part he relied on his instincts. He explained, “But I trust my first impulses. You know? In music, in art and stuff like that...where I like to think that the rough draft is the keeper!”

Margaret, on the other hand, described her multiple draft process as one that may occur over several days. She shared she was taught to write everything down then put some distance between her and the text for at least a day. According to Murray (2004), the purpose of the first draft is for writers to discover what they have to say. Margaret emphasized that the first draft allows her “to put ink on the page;” later she revisits her initial draft, rewriting as needed. In a similar vein Mindy discussed the idea that planning is not writing, but still an important part of getting ideas down on paper.

Mindy’s drafting process involved jotting down notes and creating detailed outlines to help her generate text. “I just jot down [words or phrases]...I may not use any of them, but I have to like brainstorm first.” Seemingly different than Don and Brian, Margaret and Mindy expressed that they do not want their drafts or first writing attempts published. Mindy explained, “I wouldn’t really want someone to read how I started. These are my initial thoughts and ideas that are still raw and unpolished.” She indicated that a piece of writing takes on new dimensions as it unfolds; where it ends may be different than the plan the writer had in the beginning. The purpose of drafting for Margaret and Mindy is to first empty their ideas onto the paper, mull them over, and

revise the content. In her book, *Bird by Bird*, Ann Lamott described these first writing attempts claiming, “The first draft is the child’s draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later” (p. 22).

Writer’s block. Two teachers acknowledged the authenticity of experiencing writer’s block, the inability to produce a piece of writing. For Wes, the phenomenon of writer’s block was real, and “as a writer in general, at some point or another you hit a block...that wall where you go.” Wes, more often than any other member of the community, expressed his struggle with writer’s block. In his first interview, he described the challenges he experiences with writing, discussing specifically writer’s block.

Most of the time what challenges me is what to do when you hit a stop. Because you know the temptation is to quit, give up, go do something else and never ever come back. So, how do you work through that? How do you get yourself re-motivated? How do you get yourself to focus back in? That would probably be the biggest challenge, and I’ve gotten fairly good with at least the stuff that I have to get done. My own personal work, obviously, I’m still working on that. But, that’s what I would say would be the biggest challenge... What do you do when you hit that wall?

As a writer, Wes explained, you find yourself pushing through it and determining where you are going with the writing. As a result, Wes utilized several problem-solving techniques when he experienced writer’s block. He explained, “I reevaluate and ask, ‘Is this what I really want?’ It’s also about, ‘Where am I going with this? Does this work?’ and the whole process of ‘How can I get this to where I need it to be?’” Wes, through questioning and reexamining his work, was able to push past the wall.

Larissa also indicated her struggle with writer's block referring to the experience, as "You're crazy all the time!" When asked about her writing challenges, Larissa admitted that there are times when her words fail her. "Finding the right words sometimes hinders me because I want to make sure the reader visualizes, and then I don't want to be redundant and repeat the same things over and over." Despite their challenges with writer's block, Wes and Larissa viewed it as a natural phase a writer goes through when composing a piece of text. Murray (2004) advised, "We need to understand, first of all, that many times writer's block is a natural and appropriate way to respond to a writing task or a new stage in the writing process" (p. 44).

Mentor texts. Teachers in the Writing Collaborative agreed that in order to write well, writers need models to emulate. In the previous chapter I presented an episode of talk in which Wes and Leah discussed how their reading materials serve as models or mentor texts for their writing. Additionally, teachers admitted to seeking out published and non-published text to serve as models for their own writing.

In session six, teachers reviewed a variety of poems from various poets and chose one to serve as a mentor text for creating their own poem about a topic from their heart map. In the discussion that followed this writing activity, I proposed a question regarding the use of models for our own writing. In the episode of talk presented below, Margaret, Leah, Wes and I explored the idea of mentor texts, illustrating its impact on our own craft.

Allison: Wonder how many writers emulate other writers? Not plagiarize...

Margaret: Yeah, I think so.

- Allison: Or use as inspiration?
- Margaret: And from that they expand their own style. Maybe by reading others it helps build up some confidence within themselves and that they are not far off the track.
- Allison: You figure if they've got it published....or other people are reading this...mine's sort of like...falls in line. Yeah, I think you're right because what I've done so far, I can see where I'm branching out with my own little "Ooh that works! Let me try that."
- Leah: And if a book hits the bestselling list, there will be 55 books right behind it that just....same thing.
- Wes: Actually, I'm using "Litany" by Billy Collins for mine which is a poem he wrote where he stole the first two lines from someone else and as he put it, "Wrote it better."

This discussion illustrated the ways in which the teachers in the collaborative made meanings about how writers use models or mentor texts to guide and inspire their own writing. As Margaret noted, using writing models not only helps writers expand their styles, but also use of models builds a writer's confidence. Her comments appeared self-reflective, suggesting her own comfort in using models, which provide her confidence when she writes. In previous sessions, Margaret often used the writing samples I shared with the group to jumpstart her own pieces of text. Interestingly, Wes chose a mentor text in which the author "borrowed" another writer's lines to produce his own poem. The use of models for writing is a common and suggested practice from writers and experts in the field. Fletcher (1996b) declared, "If we hope to write well, we have to learn from the men and women who have mastered our craft. We draw as close to them as they will allow and watch them at work" (p. 49).

Sharing and feedback. Finally, teachers' experiences of sharing their writing and providing or receiving writing feedback as part of the writing process, although unfamiliar and uncomfortable for some, proved supportive of their writing efforts and meanings they made about writing and themselves as writers. Throughout the Writing Collaborative sessions, teachers engaged in *inkshedding* as a process for sharing writing and providing oral and written feedback to one another. In chapter four I provided noteworthy examples of the ways in which the share practices of the community reinforced and encouraged teachers as writers during the inkshedding process. I revisit inkshedding and the teachers' responses to the process, primarily from their post interviews, in this chapter to emphasize the intimidating, yet supportive process of teachers sharing their writing in the Writing Collaborative.

Professional writers alike recognize the anxiety that is felt when sharing their writing with someone else whether it is a colleague, a family member, or a friend. Despite these feelings, most writers find it a necessary and beneficial part of the process to have someone one read their drafts and give them "an honest critique, let you know what does and doesn't work, give you some suggestions on things you might take out or things on which you need to elaborate, ways in which to make your piece stronger" (Lamott, 1994, p. 163). Interestingly, most of the teachers, with the exception of Margaret, Wes, and Brian, declined to comment about inkshedding when asked about the process during several sessions. However, in the post interviews, I probed further to elicit their perspectives and feelings about inkshedding. Of the seven teachers, only one, Brian, stated without hesitancy that he enjoyed sharing his writing with others in the

collaborative. Unlike the other teachers, Brian expressed no fear of inkshedding, but immediately connected the process to his teaching of writing.

Brian: Oh, I like that [inkshedding] and, you know, this sharing writing thing...a lot of the kids I teach are real apprehensive about letting anybody else see what they've written. You know? In the collaborative that we were doing it was not intimidating to do that So, my takeaway was that there's got to be ways that I can get the kids interested in seeing what one another is doing.

Brian saw the process as a great opportunity for peers to share and see what one another is doing with writing. He implied that by sharing one's work, we are teaching and learning from others.

For the other teachers, however, the inkshedding process brought on fear, anxiety and vulnerability at first. During several Writing Collaborative sessions Margaret admitted to being uncomfortable allowing others to read her writing. "I felt very apprehensive thinking that others would read these. It's tough to expose yourself. But, I did, I felt a sense of panic." In her post interview, she shared that she still had a very difficult time participating in inkshedding and exposing herself to her colleagues. However, she admitted there was value in the process for her as a writer and the students in her classroom. "Oh, I think it's really neat because of all the input you get, and I am definitely going to use it next year in the classroom, but I'm going to do it in a much smaller version." Margaret's comments seemed to suggest her students would experience similar apprehension she felt during the process, hence her need for a "smaller version." This thought was confirmed when she finalized her comments on inkshedding, stating, "I think all of us feel apprehensive when we inkshed, wondering whether that neighbor will

make or poke fun, and I don't want that to happen to my students. So, I'm really going to have to do that very carefully."

Larissa, Leah, and Mindy shared similar feelings of anxiety about inkshedding, but they were more concerned about other English teachers critiquing their handwriting, spelling, grammar, mechanics, and content. As English teachers they expressed concern as to whether their writing measured up to others. Essentially, they were concerned how their writing would resonate with the community (Horne, 2012). Larissa, who admitted she was "scared to death" of inkshedding in the beginning, described this feeling as being "under the knife." Leah shared her concern about others' reactions to the content of her writing, claiming, "I don't feel like I'm normal. I've never been a normal person, so I'm scared when people read it they'll go, 'Whoof! She had those thoughts? She needs to seek help.' This is exactly the way I feel, though." Mindy explained her biggest fear was word choice and use of vocabulary in her writing. "I get real worried about 'Is my vocabulary going to be as good as somebody else's?' or when they read this, you know, that type of thing." Despite their feelings of intimidation and anxiety, Larissa, Leah, and Mindy agreed that inkshedding was beneficial and became comfortable the more they engaged in the process. Larissa admitted, "I became more relaxed. It brought on a great conversation and opened everything up." For Leah, the process became easier "because I got to see their stuff wasn't all you know...everybody has their..." flaws.

Like Brian and Margaret, Mindy reflected on the value of inkshedding for her students. "The more we did it, the more comfortable I got. So, I think the kids would, too." Despite her nervousness, inkshedding served to build confidence in Mindy's

writing. “I feel more confident in my writing if I see other people’s writing...I just like to see what others do. I liked that part of it, too.”

Wes’s motto for inkshedding became, “fake it until you make it.” While Wes recognized the anxiety others felt with inkshedding, “With me, it was more of just an initial reluctance.” He kept reminding himself to “trust the process.” Like others, Wes liked the idea of feedback for his writing and was interested in what others thought.

When asked in his final interview about inkshedding, Don confessed that he did not like it at all primarily because he felt it was not his place to critique others’ work. He reasoned that writers do not set out to produce “bad” writing; “They’re not going to put down something that sucks in their own mind.” In essence, he felt uncomfortable providing feedback to his peers, but not his students, explaining that it is his job to provide feedback to students about their writing. “With my kids I have no problem being critical with their stuff, but somebody who has volunteered to take a class, etc...I wouldn’t dare be critical.” Unlike the other teachers, Don stated that the inkshedding process would not have become more comfortable given more time. “I just have a hard time being very critical when I don’t need to be.”

Despite the uneasiness that accompanied inkshedding, teachers agreed the environment of the Writing Collaborative was inviting and the feedback they received was “insightful and generous.” Moreover, teachers came to the realization that sharing their own writing allowed them to empathize with a writer’s sensitivity (Hansen, 1985). As Horne (2012) pointed out, “Sometimes, learning what the community values must

come through trial and error in the inkshedding practice and other interactions with the community” (p. 74).

Personal Aspects of Writing

The personal nature of writing represented a recurring theme throughout teachers’ meaning making about writing and themselves as writers. According to Burke (2003), “writing is always personal, even when it is academic” (p. xii). As illustrated by the other categories of meanings presented in this chapter, teachers related and referred to writing as personal in nature. As previously discussed, teachers defined writers personally; recognized personal purposes for writing; generated writing ideas from personal stories, events, and memories; and described the writing process as unique to each person.

Writing honestly. Additionally, teachers concluded that writing is personally engaging, but requires honesty and introspection about oneself as a writer and, more importantly, as a human. To write well, writers must be honest with themselves (Lamott, 1994), taking the courage to express what they think and feel (Fletcher, 1996a). Margaret admitted that being honest with herself in her writing was a challenge. “I am much more guarded with my writing and my feelings on paper.” It seemed her sense of vulnerability hindered her from facing up to hard truths, causing her to put up “that natural, I guess, level of guard.” She later confessed that when she allowed herself to take writing seriously, “I’m honest with myself to the point that sometimes it is brutal.” Margaret’s notion of “brutality” paralleled Don Murray’s (2004) idea of *disloyalty* – “writing not what the subject would want us to say but what we honestly perceive about that subject”

(Fletcher, 1996b) which he argued is one of the writer's most important tools. For Margaret and other writers, learning to be brutally honest in their writing helped breakdown the "kind of facade or something we just can't seem to put out there."

Making writing public. According to Murray, until writers allow their work to be read by strangers, the act of writing is never complete. Once published, "their writing detaches itself from them and goes its own way" (p. 61). Similarly, Brian pointed out that writers relinquish control once their writing is made public. "Oh, once something is published, it's out of our hands." Brian, who does not mind sharing his writing, implied that publishing and having his work read by others was a given part of the process. He argued that readers take the writer's words and make their own understanding. While publication is not always the ultimate goal, he realized he loses ownership of the text once it is made public. Brian explained:

I'm not choosy at all about what I share. If I make it public, it is public. You know, it's like playing music. Once you play the note, it's no longer in your possession. It's out there someplace now, and you've relinquished some of it. People will take it and make it their own in some way. I mean, as to these things that are between covers and stuff out there... if a person is interested in reading it who I am I to stop them? I wouldn't have published it if I were afraid that somebody might read it, you know?

Brian's comments illustrated his confidence as a writer, but also Bakhtin's (1986) idea that any instance of language, oral or written, is "double-voiced," having been populated with the voice of the speaker and the voices of others. This phenomenon is intertextual, illustrating the ways in which a specific text relates to other texts (Ivanič, 1998). Brian's utterances such as "it's out of our hands," "it is public," "it's no longer in your

possession,” “it’s out there someplace,” “you’ve relinquished some of it,” and “make it their own” demonstrated his understanding that once his writing is made public it becomes animated with other voices, reflective of “their encounters with real people and real texts” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 181). Bakhtin referred to this continuous and constant interaction as the process of assimilation.

Our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others’ words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of “our-own-ness,” varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate. (p. 89)

However, Larissa argued that sharing one’s writing, making it public, and relinquishing control have a time and place dictated by the author. She voiced, “I think in a sense, though, when you’re writing sometimes you take it so personally that you don’t want to share until you’re finished.” Whether Larissa recognizes it or not, language is acquired through social use and interactions. While writers have a choice as to whether they share their writing with others, the writing is still populated with and shaped by others’ words and meanings. How much Larissa chooses to add her own meanings that re-accentuate and rework the text in an explicit move to put her words out there and shape what others say is ultimately up to her. Unlike Brian, however, it appeared she was not as comfortable putting her writing out there for others.

Margaret shared similar feelings about the privacy of her writing, being selective of the pieces she shared with others. On several occasions she prefaced the sharing of her writing with self-deprecating comments such as, “Mine is very simplistic compared to the

rest of you,” “Mine is very simple, but that is how my mind works,” or “This may not be the best way to write this.” Once her writing was made public in the collaborative, Margaret often felt dissatisfied and attempted to clarify her writing to those with whom she shared. These experiences of publication exemplified the extent to which the teachers relinquished a certain level of control over their work and “a movement to a public place where personal boundaries and ideas about privacy are reexamined” (Horne, 2012, p.121).

Exposing the self. Most importantly, the data supported the teachers’ feelings that their writing exposes and represents the self. Repeatedly, teachers in the collaborative mentioned their insecurity with sharing their writing, suggesting that it revealed aspects of themselves with which they were uncomfortable. When we write, we reveal ourselves on the page, creating our own thumbprint and our own voice; consequently, “writing is self-exposure” (Murray, 2004, p. 45). During the collaborative sessions, Larissa alluded to the representation of self that is sometimes displayed in one’s writing. In session seven, for example, she discussed the apprehensiveness she feels when exposing her writing to others and revealing who she is as a person.

Well, is it because you think when we write it represents ourselves and what’s inside of us, too? And, also, creating this little heart thing, I realized how much of myself I’m letting....exposing. And when I see a blank sheet of paper it’s hard to get started on that because I am bleeding all over it, not just ink, but from myself.

In this example, Larissa described the intimacy the act of writing conveyed for her and how her life-history is reflected in what she “bleeds” all over the page. A writer’s life-

history represents encounters and past experiences that are brought to every act of writing (Burgess & Ivanič , 2010; Ivanič , 1998), revealing various aspects of the self.

Robert Yagelski (2009), in discussing writing, says he never thought about the act of writing as separate from the experience. "Writing, not the text itself, is what matters" (p. 6). He goes on to discuss the ontology of writing. "When we write, we enact a sense of ourselves as beings in the world. In this regard, writing both shapes and reflects our sense of who we are in relation to each other and the world around us.

Margaret addressed the revealing nature of writing saying, "I just...I just don't want to expose myself." Ivanič (1998) explained writing as the product of the writer's life-history stating, "Writing is not some neutral activity which we just learn like a physical skill, but it implicates every fibre of the writer's multifaceted being" (p. 181). Consequently, past experiences, events, and activities, social in nature, affect how we write. In essence, people bring an identity to any act of writing, an *autobiographical self*. Ivanič (1998) argued that an autobiographical self emphasizes,

the fact that this aspect of identity is associated with a writer's sense of their roots, of where they are coming from, and that this identity they bring with them to writing is itself socially constructed and constantly changing as a consequence of their developing life-history: it is not some fixed, essential 'real self'. (p. 24)

Larissa and Margaret felt a sense of vulnerability when they wrote and particularly when they shared their writing. This may have been due to the nature of the writing tasks, such as the heart map, which were drawn from personal experiences. The Writing Collaborative was a new experience for both teachers; as such, they appeared to lack confidence in their writing, contributing to their feelings of vulnerability. While not all

writing is self-revelatory, it does raise the question about the kinds of vulnerability students might feel as well. For the teachers in the collaborative, writing was a way of representing their life experiences to themselves, which reflected a sense of who they were as a person (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Ivanič, 1998). However, as noted by Larissa and Margaret, some writers find it difficult to reveal themselves to others through their writing, particularly those texts that contain intimate details of their lives.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the meanings teachers negotiated about writers, writing, and themselves as writers fostered by their engagement in the share practices of the Writing Collaborative. Data revealed five categories of meanings teachers made through collaborative discussions about writing and engagement in various writing tasks during the collaborative sessions: *definitions of writers*, *purposes of writing*, *writing ideas*, *writing as a process*, and *personal aspects of writing*. These meanings were a result of a productive process in which teachers drew from their experiences in the Collaborative, but also from their previous experiences with writing. It is important to understand that meaning, while not pre-existing, is not simply made up; “negotiated meaning is at once both historical and dynamic, contextual and unique” (Wenger, 1998, p. 54). By talking and interacting with one another, revealing past experiences with writing, and sharing thinking about writing, teachers in the collaborative constantly negotiated new meanings about writers and writing, and enacted writer identities in the process. In chapter six I present and discuss the ways in which the

practices of the community and the meanings teachers made about writers and writing shaped each of the teachers' identities as writers.

CHAPTER VI

SHAPING TEACHERS' IDENTITIES AS WRITERS

The *writing* does not create us, but in the act of writing we *are*; by writing we reaffirm and proclaim our being in the here and now.

(Yagelski, 2009, p.17)

We grow into new selves with every sentence we write, with every choice we make among the almost endless set of possibilities for their construction. To fail in that articulation is to foreclose on our identities, to cut short the process of discovering ourselves in thought.

(Imbrie, 1999, p.19)

In the previous chapter I examined the meanings teachers negotiated about writers, writing, and themselves as writers. These collective meanings represented not only new understandings, but also meanings previously held by teachers that became modified, altered or adjusted as a result of their negotiations. Given the practices, specifically the sharing and response to sharing, that emerged from the Writing Collaborative and the collective meanings teachers made about writers and writing, it is important to examine the ways in which these findings shaped and reshaped the writer identities of each teacher over the course of the collaborative.

Although I presented and analyzed the share practice and meaning-making data in separate chapters, they in no way function in isolation. It is our engagement in the practices and the meanings we make from our engagement that creates our learning, thus our identities. “Issues of identity are an integral aspect of a social theory of learning

and are thus inseparable from issues of practice, community, and meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). We define ourselves in relation to the community in which the negotiation of meanings of our experiences constructs our identities (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000). Becoming (or not becoming) active teachers in the practices of the community give rise to the meanings we negotiate, shaping our identities and sense of belonging. Thus, identities are constructed just as much through participation as they are non-participation (Wenger, 1998). As such, we may encounter many communities of practice in which we are full or limited members (Solomon, 2007). This implies that identities are not fixed; we are constantly enacting our identities. In doing so, our identities form trajectories that may take us from the peripheral of the community to becoming a full participating member, a characteristic of identity that Wenger (1998) refers to as “a constant becoming.” More explicitly, Bakhtin (1981) argued that dialogic interactions facilitate a persistent and continuous process of *ideological becoming*. Through dialogic exchange, individuals author themselves by negotiating the meanings of others’ words and using them to create their own meanings. Thus, the process for *becoming* a writer in the Writing Collaborative was a central focus.

I need to reiterate that the Writing Collaborative was a newly formed community and the teachers were, in essence, “newcomers.” For newcomers to a community, legitimate peripheral participation, as described by Lave and Wenger (1991), is the process by which they “become part of a community of practice” (p.29). Peripherality, serves as a pathway to gaining access to the practices and the knowledge of “old-timers” that facilitate learning and identification as a member of the community. However, these

notions of periphery and participation became interesting to consider for this study (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2001) given that all of the teachers were new to the Writing Collaborative.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the identities that were enacted and shaped by each teacher in the collaborative, serving to answer the overall research question for this study:

How do secondary English teachers' identities shape and how are they shaped by the community of the Writing Collaborative?

For the purpose of this chapter, I have organized the discussion of individual teachers' writer identities around how they defined themselves as writers before and after participation in the collaborative, how they positioned themselves or were positioned by others as writers, and what the data suggested about the writer identities that were enacted and shaped.

Brian: "The rough draft is the keeper!"

Brian consistently defined and positioned himself as a confident writer with a strong voice who used writing as a tool for exploring his curiosities and conveying his thoughts and ideas for various purposes and audiences. He moved quickly into a position of full membership in the community, taking initiative to generate and engage others in discussions. In negotiating a definition of a writer, Brian argued that writers are observers and reporters who are obligated to expose truths through the writing they create. He illustrated this notion when he wrote a revealing piece about a local minister

who preached about the cocaine issue among the youth in the community. Additionally, he commented that writers “need to empathize in order to feel something for what we are writing about.” This empathy was reflected in the journal writing that he used “in search of the meaning of my life.” Among the seven teachers, Brian was the most self-assured and made no hesitation regarding his writer identities, which manifested themselves in several ways through engagement in the share practices and the nuanced meanings he and others negotiated about writers and writing. In all, Brian enacted five primary writer identities throughout the Writing Collaborative and his interviews.

Documenter

Brian primarily positioned himself and was positioned by others as a writer who used writing to document and chronicle life experiences. He demonstrated the importance of documenting experiences when he shared a framed memento inscribed by his grandfather, reflecting the history of the family-owned bread store. He also described the compilation of writings he accrued over the last thirty years in blank books called a “Nothing Book,” which he compared to the writer’s notebooks we used in the collaborative. During the collaborative sessions he explained that writing for him was a process of searching for deeper meaning, and documenting thoughts and experiences on a daily basis helped in that search. He reflected on the importance of documenting and how it served him in his recovery from a traumatic brain injury. Brian believed that writers are spontaneous and reactionary and documenting allowed him that privilege. Therefore, as a writer he trusted his first impulses, to “wing it” and “just produce.”

Songwriter

Brian also positioned himself artistically as a songwriter, one for whom art, music, and writing collide. In his interview, he discussed his passion for songwriting and music, reflecting on musical gigs he had performed and songs he had produced. He shared numerous examples of his songwriting and poetry to which he also wrote musical accompaniment. During several discussions, Brian referenced specific songs and lyrics from other songwriters that exemplified a point he was trying to make or illustrated understandings he gleaned. Brian's identity as a songwriter aligned with his notions of writing as an art form, which was shared and recognized by Larissa and Leah, allowing connections and deeper conversations about this type of writing among them. At one session he explained, "Language is a malleable thing like clay or paint or something, and it's just something that can be fooled around with to make the moment better." Others recognized Brian's identity as a songwriter, particularly Leah who confessed to writing song lyrics as well. His piece, "Wave to the Caboose," written and performed at the Writing Collaborative celebration further confirmed his identity as an artistic songwriter.

Author

Brian enacted another writer identity that positioned himself as a published author of books. During both interviews he discussed at length his writing projects and book ideas, sharing with me portions of his drafts and illustrations he had created to coincide with the text. He explained the process of online publication, an alternative he had used for publishing several of his books. Unlike some in the collaborative, Brian did not define writers merely as those who have published their work. Although he recognized that

other writers might need the type of confirmation publication could provide, publication for him was an avenue for sharing his ideas and thoughts with others. Brian's identity as an author was recognized minimally in the collaborative sessions; he enacted his author identity primarily through his interviews. Interestingly, Brian was absent for collaborative session number seven in which the teachers discussed publication and the experiences of published authors they knew personally. Without question, Brian would have contributed to the meanings the others made about the process of publication, revealing his own experiences and identity as an author.

Word Man

In one of his most prevalent writer identities revealed through his participation in the collaborative, Brian positioned himself and was positioned by others as a writer for whom unique and carefully chosen vocabulary was a hallmark of an engaging piece of writing. Brian referred many times to his incorporation of "out there" vocabulary in his writing, acquiring a majority of his words through his extensive reading. During collaborative discussions, he took the liberty to invent words such as "analogizing" and contemplated word origins of odd terms like "asphalt." Clearly identified by the other teachers as "the word man," Brian articulated the importance of word choice in one's writing and using vocabulary to enhance the reader's experience of the text. Given Brian's history of a traumatic head injury and the complications he endured with his memory as a result provided a bit of irony to his identity as a writer for whom vocabulary was a focal point.

Teacher as Writing Model

Finally, Brian's writer identities were intertwined with the context of teaching and his identity as a teacher of writing. Brian joined the Writing Collaborative to not only engage with others as a writer, but also to bring more attention to writing in the schools. "If this Collaborative can help me to do this [teach writing] better for the next 8 or 10 years before I retire, then I will have been glad to be here." Brian frequently shared examples of writing lessons and projects he was doing with his middle school students, making connections to his experiences in the collaborative to ways in which he taught writing. Likewise, he took writing tasks and ideas from the collaborative back to his classroom, recognizing the importance of engaging his students in authentic writing experiences. Brian positioned himself as a teacher of writing who modeled and wrote with his students, but he confessed the need to share more of his writing process with his students, exposing them to the complexities of writing. The teachers in the collaborative helped to shape his identity as a teacher of writing further by engaging with him in discussions about the way he taught writing, how students responded to the lessons, and suggestions for new instructional ideas. Overall, the collaborative was a space for Brian to share and continue his trajectory as a teacher of writing.

Brian confessed he did not experience any major changes in the way he saw himself as a writer; "I'm pretty concrete, I think, in who I am as a creative person." While it did not appear Brian constructed "new" writer identities during the course of the Writing Collaborative, it was apparent that his engagement in the shared practices and the collective meanings made about writers and writing further shaped the writer identities he

enacted in the collaborative. This was particularly true in the teaching of writing when he elaborated on the ways in which he would make more of his writing process visible to students and discuss the intricacies of how a piece of writing evolved. Brian was able to move beyond seeing the Writing Collaborative as support for his own writing, to one that helped him build the writing capacity of his students. Without question, his participation contributed to the shaping of the community, as he was a vocal, interactive member. His experiences also reinforced his position that teachers of writing should engage in the writing process themselves. He argued, “If you want to teach writing well, you’d better know how to do it.”

Don: “If you can’t write it, don’t think it.”

Don admittedly joined the collaborative cognizant of the challenge researcher’s face in securing participants. Feeling a sense of obligation, he made concerted efforts to attend each session. Among the seven teachers, Don was the most non-committal to writing in his personal life. His engagement in the Writing Collaborative can be described as one of mixed participation, moving between passiveness and engagement. On occasion, he positioned himself as an outsider to the community, claiming his writing was not as “deep” as others. This positioning shaped how he interacted with the other teachers, particularly his practices as a writer. At times he sat on the periphery of the collaborative, appearing to have a difficult time finding an entry point into the discussions. At other times, Don appeared to be on an inward trajectory when he engaged in topical discussions or used humor to gain entry into a group conversation.

In both interviews, he identified himself, not as a writer, but rather as one who knows *how* to write; he understood the mechanics of writing. He made a clear distinction between knowing how to write and “being a writer that somebody wants to read.” According to Don, being a writer included publishing one’s work and being read by others. This definition did not align with how Don saw himself, as he implied several times that his writing was not as insightful as the other teachers. Despite his limited participation within the community as it related to his identities as a writer, Don exhibited more participation and engagement when discussions turned to the teaching of writing, as it did on several occasions during the collaborative sessions. Primarily, Don enacted two writer identities over the course of the study, a functional writer and a creative writing teacher.

Functional Writer

First, Don positioned himself as a functional writer, one who wrote out of necessity. He described those occasions when he wrote letters of recommendations for student athletes, email correspondences to friends and colleagues and lesson plans. For the most part, Don proclaimed he had little eagerness or time to write, unless an occasion required it. He was, however, proud of his ability to write a thoughtful thank you note or card, a quality he felt had been lost amongst the technological means of communication. Where he is from, he explained, it is an expectation that one composes a well-written thank you note. Don identified himself as one who “possessed the ability to write,” which he made clear was not synonymous with being a writer. Having the ability to write, he explained, required knowledge of the spoken and written language, including syntax and

vernacular. His definition was reflective of his positioning within the collaborative, being viewed as one who knew the mechanics of writing and used writing to function in his daily life.

Creative Writing Teacher

Given time in the collaborative, Don's participation and contributions to the meanings made about writers and writing increased, specifically when the discussions migrated to the teaching of writing. Don appeared more comfortable discussing his identity as a teacher of writing, positioning himself as a creative writing teacher. On different occasions he shared in detail successful writing lessons he had conducted with his students such as journal writing from different points of view, a descriptive essay, and a creative writing portfolio in which students composed in various genres on topics of their choice. As such, he contributed to the meanings teachers made about the teaching of writing, particularly expressive and sensory writing. As with Brian, the other teachers were interested in these creative writing lessons and asked that Don share his ideas and resources for use in their classroom. Enacted, this teacher of writing identity stood in stark contrast to his identity as a functional writer. Although he advocated the teaching of creative writing to enhance and broaden his students' writing repertoire, he did not transfer this same ideology to his own writing practice. This seeming contradiction of Don's writer identities is consistent with theories of identity that emphasize the fact that "individuals are composed of multiple, often conflicting, identities" (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 3). For Don, his identity as a teacher of writing took precedence over his identity as a

writer, prompting him to engage in the practices and meaning making of the Writing Collaborative, but maintaining his identity as a functional writer.

In his post interview, Don reflected on his sense of himself as writer. He compared himself to the other “insightful” writers in the collaborative, concluding he was not a writer. Ironically, for the writing celebration, Don wrote a very insightful, emotional piece about a former student athlete, which visibly moved the rest of the group. However, Don was resolved in his belief that teachers should know *how* to write in order to teach writing effectively. “You have to be able to write a little bit to be able to explain the process to kids.” This statement reflected his unwavering notion that possessing the ability and knowledge to write characterizes a writer, but did not advocate that teachers engage in writing on a regular basis. The concept of “being” a writer versus the “ability” to write were reflected in the writer identities he enacted during the Writing Collaborative sessions and interviews.

Larissa: “The ink from my pen only flows when I have sweat on my brow.”

Relatively new to the profession, Larissa had always wanted to participate in a writers’ guild with her teaching peers. Admittedly shy and nervous in front of others, Larissa did not define herself as writer, citing lack of time to write. She described writing as an outlet, “a way to release your inner thoughts and feelings.” She noted that writers moved through phases, experiencing highs such as great ideas and lows such as writer’s block during the process. She also stated writing was emotional and spiritual; it involved the imagination, thoughts and intrapersonal feelings. Larissa’s perceptions of herself as a writer, however, presented contradictions. Although she did not define herself as writer,

she described writing experiences, such as keeping a personal journal and writing poetry and fictional stories that suggested she did enact identities, at times, consistent with those who believed they were writers.

Larissa's engagement in the Writing Collaborative began slowly, tentatively, but gained momentum and progressed on a trajectory toward full membership. In the beginning, Larissa typically did not share her writing or book study quotes and ideas with the collaborative. Instead, she participated silently, making eye contact when others spoke or nodding her head in agreement with comments made by others. Thus, she contributed to the practices of the community by being a silent cheerleader and attentive listener for the other teachers. Examining her participation across the Collaborative sessions, Larissa did not begin to move away from the periphery of the community until session five when she became more involved in collaborative discussions, sharing and contributing to the meanings teachers made about writers and writing. It was not until session seven, however, that Larissa appeared the most comfortable discussing her writing and herself as a writer. The sharing of her heart map was a pivotal moment in regard to her membership in the community and one that shaped her as a creative writer.

Creative Writer

Although Larissa referenced her "creative mode" and "creative juices" on two prior occasions, it was not until she engaged in the heart map activity that she fully positioned herself and was positioned by others as a creative writer. The heart map activity connected Larissa's creative writer identity to her definitions and descriptions of writers and writing, allowing her to use her "imagination" and "release her inner thoughts

and feelings.” Larissa held the attention of the group for approximately ten minutes as she described the process of creating her heart map. A unique aspect of her engagement in this writing task and the meanings she made involved the ways in which her reflexive thinking led to insights about herself as a writer. She questioned herself about the organization of the heart map, stating, “that’s how my creativity goes, it’s all...obscure.” She also realized the challenges being creative posed for her claiming, “That’s why I have a hard time with my creativity because I don’t embrace it inside of my heart.” Larissa’s reflexive thinking about this activity illustrated one way in which she constructed a writer identity for herself, reviewing the process she used for the writing, the reasons for how she organized it, and past experiences that influenced her thinking. For Larissa, this discursive act of describing and explaining the writing of her heart map opened up possibilities for becoming a writer (Danielewicz, 2001).

Larissa, describing her experiences from the collaborative, felt the discussions and writing tasks “pushed me to be more creative” and “encouraged me to share my ideas.” She attributed this to the atmosphere of trust and collegiality that was created within the Writing Collaborative. She admitted that participation in the Collaborative made her more aware of her own writing abilities and ways in which she could adjust her writing instruction. Having previously identified herself as a non-writer, Larissa reconsidered stating she “had her moments” where she considered herself a writer. As to whether teachers should be writers, Larissa’s perspective had not changed; teachers should engage in the practice of writing in order to be models for their students.

Leah: “Writing is a talent, like singing, acting – and you need to hone your talent.”

Leah, one of the first teachers to commit to the study, joined the Writing Collaborative, having never participated in a writing group. Leah’s participation in the Writing Collaborative was moderate across the sessions, slipping in and out of engagement. There were many instances where Leah chose not to share her writing or thoughts related to the book study. However, her keen sense of humor and sharp wit, which she shared with Don, contributed to the sense of community that was constructed in the collaborative.

Leah defined writers as researchers and those who are creative. She believed that being a writer was not innate, that one became a writer through the process of research. In defining herself as a writer, Leah stated she would love to be a writer, but felt she lacked the ability “to do the intricate part of actually writing.” However, she defined herself as a researcher, one who had the ideas and could gather the information. She expressed a desire to be a researcher because research writing had structure and “I feel like I have it.” In contrast to how she saw herself as a writer, Leah shared in her interviews that she had written songs for her son who sang in a band, written poetry, and generated ideas for fictional books. Interestingly, Leah shared very little of these writing experiences during collaborative discussions. Despite claims of not being a writer, Leah enacted two predominant writer identities during the course of the collaborative, that of reader-writer and list maker.

Reader-writer

One writer identity Leah enacted involved her identity as a reader. Leah described on several occasions her passion for reading and her interest in learning about an author's craft, even attending book signings at local bookstores. In introducing herself to the group, she described the excitement of attending an author's roundtable, learning about her favorite authors and how they crafted a piece of writing. Thus, she felt strongly that writers needed models to emulate and that our reading of others' works served as the best models. Her reader-writer identity also manifested itself in the ways in which she responded to a piece of text. Leah demonstrated a particular interest in how writers used language to appeal to the reader. Leah's responses to teachers who shared their writing in the group tended to focus on specific lines of text or ways in which the writer used language for sensory effect. In her final interview, Leah positioned herself again as one who is not a writer, but "would love to because I'm a reader." Murray (2004) claimed that "When writers read something very good they want to write." (p. 87). This appeared to be the case for Leah, as she described the "massive ideas" she had for books, but was too scared to start the writing process.

List Maker

The most identifiable writer identity Leah enacted was that of "habitual list-maker." Leah became most engaged in the practices and meaning making of the collaborative when the talk shifted to the topic of making notes or lists. During those discussions, Leah moved quickly to the center of the community, taking a primary role in the conversations. She described the multitude of lists she maintained, their purposes,

their histories, and the information they revealed about her life's experiences, personally and professionally. Others, particularly family members, for whom Leah made lists as well, recognized her identity as a list maker.

How Leah perceived herself as a writer and the writing experiences she revealed (such as her songs picked up by MCA records) was inconsistent and contradictory to the writer identities she enacted and the ways she positioned herself in the Writing Collaborative. In the last interview, however, she described a notable change in her sense of herself as writer, claiming, "I mean, I see myself really able to write poetry." She felt a sense of pride and accomplishment when she shared her poems with a few people outside the collaborative and received positive feedback. She attributed this change in writer identity to the structure of the collaborative in that she was enabled to "just let it flow out of you by doing some writing." In other words, the collaborative provided a space for Leah to explore other possibilities for her writing.

Leah's notion of whether teachers should be writers to teach writing remained unwavering. She did not believe teachers had to be writers, but felt strongly they should be readers in order to teach writing. This was an interesting perspective and paralleled her reader-writer identity she enacted for herself. Her perspective also aligned with literature on writing that promotes a reader-writer and writer-reader stance and the interconnectedness of reading and writing (Atwell, 1998; Buckner, 2005; & Murray, 2004).

Margaret: “Writing is life.”

Margaret’s interest in participating in the Writing Collaborative was twofold, stemming from her engagement in journal writing to relieve stress and work through life’s problems and recognizing the writing weaknesses of her students. Among the seven teachers, Margaret’s engagement and participation level was the highest. Her inviting personality and upbeat attitude pegged her as the mother of the group, the social hostess. Her presence in the collaborative was pivotal in making others “feel at home” and comfortable with their new surroundings.

Margaret defined writers as those who were “clear, concise, and to the point” and who followed correct grammatical and mechanical structure. Additionally, she described writing as a building that was structured one brick at a time using specific writing tools. In defining herself as a writer, Margaret paralleled her previous definition stating that she was “short, to the point.” Personally, she considered herself a writer because she wrote daily in her journals, however, professionally she did not claim a writer identity, declaring that professional writers were published authors. During the collaborative sessions, Margaret maintained a clear dichotomy between the personal writing she did for therapeutic purposes and the type of writing she taught and expected from her students. As such, Margaret enacted two distinct writer identities, one of private writer and the other of traditional teacher of writing.

Private Writer

The most predominant writer identity Margaret claimed and enacted was that of a private / personal writer. Margaret shared, in her interviews and on numerous occasions

in the collaborative, her practice of journal writing for therapeutic purposes. She repeated her mantras, “If I couldn’t write, I couldn’t breathe” and “Writing is healing,” in various ways throughout the sessions. She described using her private journals for writing about traumatic experiences and troubling times in her life. Journals were Margaret’s way of facing and eliminating the hurt and pain that stemmed from many of those experiences. As part of her journal practice, she admitted to purging them, burning them actually, to signify the elimination of those past heartaches and the process of moving forward. As a result of her private writer identity, Margaret was very skeptical and nervous about sharing her writing with others, particularly during inkshedding activities. She compensated by steering away from writing about personal topics that might be seen by others. When she did volunteer to share her writing, she guarded her words by giving a retelling of what she wrote rather than the original text. Despite her attempts to not write about personal topics in the collaborative, Margaret sometimes gravitated back to personal, private topics that were of most concern for her. While the teachers in the collaborative created an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, Margaret continued to guard her writing, choosing to engage in discussions centered around the book study and topics that were less about her personal life.

Traditional Teacher of Writing

In another enacted identity, Margaret positioned herself as a traditional teacher of writing. In the beginning, Margaret applied her “clear, concise, to the point, grammatically and mechanically correct” writing philosophy to her teaching of writing, expressing the need for her students’ research papers “to follow the correct guidelines of

acceptable writing.” As a secondary English teacher, her approach to teaching writing focused on correctness, structure and the written product. After two collaborative sessions, I noticed a definite reshaping of Margaret’s identity as a teacher of writing. She brought in student writing samples that were reflective of writing tasks we had completed in our sessions to share during “Good News.” On several occasions, she shared writing lessons she created that were inspired by the Collaborative. These lessons were non-traditional writing lessons, incorporating nonfiction text, response to literature, self-selected topics, and poetry. Unlike her personal writing, Margaret was eager to share writing and writing lessons that emerged from her teaching practice. These instances illustrated changes in her approach to writing instruction, moving away from traditional writing of research and essays to include more authentic writing tasks for her students. Excited about these new writing tasks, Margaret indicated their success with her students. In her final interview, she expressed that in terms of her writing instruction, she had learned to grasp, understand, and teach poetry. Where once she only taught a few traditional English poems, she now felt more confident providing different poetry experiences for her students. Margaret’s quest to offer authentic writing experiences for her students continued long after the Writing Collaborative ended. She often invited me into her classroom to observe writing lessons or view student samples that exemplified her ongoing transformation from a traditional writing teacher to a teacher of student writers.

Reflecting on her experiences in the Writing Collaborative, Margaret indicated changes in her writing identities, which were subtle for her identity as private writer,

more pronounced for her teacher of writing identity. She redefined herself as “a growing writer,” who felt more comfortable “to come out of that protective shell, to try different avenues” for writing. Margaret’s engagement in the collaborative, particularly the meanings she made about writing instruction, served to reshape her identity as a teacher of writing. In noting changes to her instructional practice, she cited the confidence to pursue different types of writing assignments with her students, an awareness that writing assignments might not be limited to one structure and too much emphasis on correctness often stifled students’ writing.

Margaret’s stance on whether teachers need to be writers in order to teach writing was significantly extended. In her first interview she indicated that teachers of writing should be able to empathize with students, to understand their writing challenges, but “if you don’t feel comfortable in doing something, it’s hard to teach that level of comfort to others.” Her comments seemed reflective of her own insecurities she exhibited with her own writing. However, in her last interview she was adamant that *all* teachers should be writers and advocates for writing in their classrooms. She went to say that English teachers should lead the charge of infusing more writing in all classrooms by leading professional development sessions for their colleagues.

Mindy: “Writing...there is no right or wrong way to do it; just write.”

Mindy expressed interest in the collaborative because she had been searching for professional development on writing that would “inspire me and others to want to teach writing well because it seems to get pushed aside.” Although she liked to teach writing, she realized that her weaknesses as a writer affected her ability to teach writing well. Of

the seven teachers, Mindy was the most reserved. Her participation in the Writing Collaborative can be characterized as passive engagement and selective participation. Wenger (1998) argued that when we encounter new landscapes of practice we move into unfamiliar territory, not quite knowing how to engage with others. “We lack shared references that participants use” (p. 153). Like Wes, Mindy’s age and minimal teaching experience seemed to place her on the periphery of the community during some discussions. Although Mindy did not contribute to the discussions or share her ideas on a consistent basis, when she did it was intentional and focused. For Mindy, some degree of non-participation was necessary as it served as an opportunity for learning, enabling her to move toward more participation.

Mindy’s self-identification as a writer stemmed from her writing experiences on the high school newspaper staff and her undergraduate program at the university. From these experiences, she felt she was a “good” writer and expressed a strong fondness for writing and a keen interest in learning to teach writing well. She defined writers as those who were able to communicate their thoughts on paper, to be able “to get their thinking down.” During the collaborative Mindy enacted two primary writer identities.

Planner

Mindy positioned herself and was positioned by the other teachers as a writer who was an extensive planner. This writer identity manifested itself during writing tasks when Mindy would take considerable time to plan or brainstorm ideas for the topic or structure of her writing. She elaborated on her planning process, which entailed researching information, brainstorming ideas, outlining key points, and listing important

words for use in her writing. She even shared the extensive notes and lists she had created in her wedding planner for her upcoming marriage. During informal conversations the teachers often asked how the planning was coming along, signifying that being a planner was an integral part of her writer identity, and applied perhaps to a broader set of identities as well. A specific discussion on whether planning was considered writing, however, caused Mindy to shift her thinking and conclude that planning is not the same as writing. As she contemplated her own planning, she realized she would not want others to see the early stages of her writing. Despite this claim, Mindy shared her planning and drafts with the group. The safe environment of the collaborative invited and supported her engagement.

Student-centered Teacher of Writing

Mindy's identity as a teacher of writing was one that was student-centered. In her first interview, she talked a lot about her beliefs about writing instruction, arguing that with new curriculum demands that placed priority on writing coupled with the lack of time in the current schedule devoted to writing, warranted a separate class for writing. Unlike most teachers in the collaborative, Mindy typically referenced her students and used them as examples to support the meanings she made about writers and writing. During book study, she chose to discuss quotes that connected to her students and their writing. In her final interview, she held steadfast to the student-centered teacher of writing identity by reflecting on the new meanings she had made about her writing instruction including, providing students with opportunities to choose their own topics, experiment with various writing structures, and ways to support student writers.

Interestingly, Mindy hesitated to identify herself as a writer when the collaborative session ended. She stated she did “have to” kinds of writing that were required for her job, but because she had little time for pursuing her own writing interests, she did not consider herself a writer. This was surprising, given she had identified herself as a writer when the Collaborative began. What prompted this change in how she saw herself as writer? Mindy joined the Collaborative with the goal to learn more about writing instruction. She confessed she had been disappointed in the beginning that the Collaborative “wouldn’t be geared toward really how to teach writing in your classroom.” This shift in focus required her to reflect on herself as a writer, causing her to redefine her writer identity and make new connections to her identity as a writing teacher. In her last interview, she contemplated *why* teachers should be writers in order to teach writing. Her reasoning was self-reflective and based on her own writing habits. “I don’t write as much as I should I guess, but writing is one of my favorite things to teach. Like I really...I like to do writing with the kids so...” She realized, however, how she taught writing, “very structured,” did not align with her experiences in the Writing Collaborative and considered changes to her instructional practice. “Maybe if I did more freelance writing or just writing like the things we did in the workshop, maybe if I instilled that in my kids then they would like it better.” Although Mindy was a silent participant in the collaborative in many ways, her reflection of her experiences and how they impacted her writer identities served as illustrations of her learning.

Wes: “Writing is that thing we start, wish we never had, and then are more relieved than ever when we finish.”

Wes, in his first year of teaching high school English, joined the collaborative with the aspiration of completing some of his personal writing pieces, particularly short stories and poetry, generated in the past. His participation in the Writing Collaborative was attentive and progressive. Wes took a peripheral position in the community at first, gradually increasing his participation in the practices and contributions to the collective meanings about writers and writing. This behavior is typical when there is a difference in generation among community members whereby “different generations bring different perspectives to their encounter because their identities are invested in different moments of that history” Wenger (1998, p. 157). As a beginning teacher and youngest member of the community, Wes had fewer life experiences, as well as fewer teaching experiences, which sometimes seemed to hinder his engagement in discussions. In order for him to gain access, he had to find a place in relation to the past and make it a part of his own identities (Wenger, 1998). Wes gained access to the community by connecting an aspect of his identities that he had in common with the other members - being a teacher. These moments became evident early in the sessions when much of his engagement and contribution to the community involved connections he made to his teaching, classroom, and students, providing him access to the community and possibilities for his own trajectories.

Wes self-identified as a writer, quickly adding, “but not the best writer.” He defined writers as those who willingly refined and revised their work, connected with their audience, and committed the time to their writing. Writers were also observant,

taking notice and interest in small details. By contrast, he described himself as a writer who struggled with rewriting and often abandoned a piece of text. However, he saw himself as a writer who could articulate his ideas simply and directly, using “an economy of language.” Wes enacted three primary writer identities during participation in the Writing Collaborative.

Writer’s Block

Wes frequently positioned himself as a writer who experienced writer’s block, one who struggled with bouts of inability to put words on paper. This identity was enacted early when, during session one, he created his representation of a writer that included a human stick figure slumped over a computer, having “hit the wall.” During writing sessions, Wes was typically the last to complete a piece of writing. He often had long pauses in his writing, appearing to struggle with getting his ideas down on paper. In one session, he explained that when writer’s block hits, he tried to “push through it” until the end. He described for the group sitting at the laptop pretending to type until his fingers actually moved. In discussing this issue with the other teachers, Wes concluded that “talk” provided one strategy for working through writer’s block. Larissa identified with Wes’s struggle with writer’s block, sharing her strategy of keeping notepads by the bed for when ideas strike. For Wes, writer’s block presented an authentic issue in his writing, but the practices of the collaborative and the discussions that ensued provided additional strategies for him. Writer’s block is a natural experience of the writing process and one that was the most telling of Wes’s writer identities.

Free Writer

Wes also enacted a writer identity that characterized him as being a free writer, one who empties his thoughts onto the page in order to “get the writing out” “all in one go.” This method for generating text is defined by Peter Elbow (1973) as a method for producing words to put down on the page, making words come more easily and the act of writing “less blocked.” Wes’s identity as a free writer complemented his identity as a writer who experienced writer’s block. As with the strategy of talk, Wes discussed how he used free writing as a method for counteracting writer’s block. A consistent structure of the Writing Collaborative that supported Wes’s quest for dealing with writer’s block was that of quickwrites. A quickwrite (Rief, 2003b) is a writing technique similar to free writing in which writers write for several minutes off an idea or line of text, helping them to generate thoughts and get them down on paper. Wes’s engagement in these short bursts of writing during the collaborative reshaped his identity as a free writer by providing another tool for his writing.

Poet

Wes, through interviews and engagement in the writing tasks of the collaborative, positioned himself and was positioned by others as a poet. Similar to the way teachers referred to Brian as the “word man,” Wes was known as “the poet” in the group. His previous poetry writing was one of the main reasons he wanted to be a part of the Writing Collaborative. He hoped to “play with some ideas; put them on paper; write poems.” The teachers frequently recognized his knack for poetry by making encouraging and supportive comments. As with the quickwrites, several writing tasks presented in the

collaborative provided Wes an opportunity for reshaping his identity as a poet. One visible sign of this reshaping occurred in the writing of his laundry poem entitled, “Whites,” which he revised for the writing celebration. During this process, group members offered feedback and responses to the poem, suggesting ideas for revision. From this support, Wes was encouraged to write more poetry to share.

Looking back, Wes noted definite changes in his writer identities as a result of his participation in the Writing Collaborative. Specifically, he discussed his new interest in writing humorous pieces, particularly with poetry. He attributed these changes, in small part, to “catering to the people I knew I would be sharing with and having something we can laugh at, joke about.” He realized almost everything he wrote in the Collaborative sessions had an edge of humor, which he figured out appealed to him as a writer. In his post interview, Wes displayed increased confidence in his identity as a writer stating as a matter of fact, “I am a writer.” The Writing Collaborative seemed to have provided a space for refashioning Wes’s identity as a burgeoning poet. Wes left the collaborative with a strong belief that teachers are all writers in their own way, engaging in everyday writing tasks for personal and job-related reasons supported his claim. While teachers do not have to be the best writers, he reasoned, they should have an understanding of writing and their daily lives should reflect writing engagement of some type.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present and discuss the writer identities for each teacher that emerged from the share practices and meanings teachers made about writers, writing, and themselves as writers. To make these determinations, I reviewed

and looked across all data sources, paying specific attention to how each teacher's participation evolved and changed over the course of the collaborative. While chapters four and five presented data on the shared practices and the meanings teachers constructed about writers and writing, and provided snapshots of the ways they positioned themselves or were positioned by others as writers, I felt it important to capture the writer identities that teachers enacted and that were shaped by the community.

Although some teachers experienced very little variation in their participation, some moved quickly from the peripheral of the community towards full membership while others drifted in and out of peripheries. Some teachers revealed clear distinctions of their writer identities; most, despite their claims of not being a writer or hesitancy in claiming to be a writer, revealed glimpses of writer identities during interviews, discussions and engagement in various writing tasks that took place in the collaborative. The teacher's enacted identities most often mirrored their definitions of writers and notions of writing, but for some, their definitions were contradictions of how they saw themselves as writers. However, this study revealed that regardless of how the teachers saw themselves as writers, all of them enacted multiple writer identities.

"By recognizing each other as participants, we give life to our respective social selves" (Wenger, 1998, p.193). It is worthy to note that the writer identities that were enacted by the teachers and shaped by the practices and meanings negotiated in the Collaborative manifested themselves in the individual as well as the collective. Collective identities, being recognized by others as a certain person, develop primarily through social interactions (Danielewicz, 2001). In the Writing Collaborative, a

collective identity entailed being recognized by others as writers. This collective identity work was not always apparent; however, through dialogic exchange, the teachers recognized others as writers, contributing to the shaping of their writer identities.

Recognition of others as writers was not limited to positive writing qualities, but also recognition of the struggles writers encounter, as was the case with Wes's writer's block. How teachers saw one another as writers was just as important to the shaping of identities as how the individual teacher in the Collaborative defined and saw themselves as writers.

Finally, it is important to understand that the writer identities reflected, to some extent, the teachers' participation in other practices, particularly practices involving writing. This was evident when teachers talked about their previous or current writing endeavors outside the collaborative (Wes's college writing course), presented information they acquired from other sources (Leah's participation in an author's roundtable), and shared instructional resources or examples from their teaching (Don sharing literature and writing lessons). Wenger (1998) noted:

We all belong to many communities of practice: some past, some current; some as full members, some in more peripheral ways. Some may be central to our identities while others are more incidental. Whatever their nature, all these various forms of participation contribute in some way to the production of our identities. (p. 158)

From membership in these other communities of practice, teachers brought with them dimensions of identities that interacted with, affected, and influenced (Danielewicz, 2001, p.23) their constructions of writer identities.

The Writing Collaborative became a space for teachers to discuss their understandings of writers and writing, and it provided a safe environment in which they could share, explore, discuss, and shape understandings of themselves as writers.

In chapter seven, I use Wenger's three modes of belonging as a way to discuss the Writing Collaborative as a space for reconsidering teachers' identities as writers. The implications for professional development for teachers of writing and instructional practice are presented. Finally, I suggest further research to support the development of teachers of writing in authentic communities of practice.

CHAPTER VII

MODES OF BELONGING: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Belonging promises identity.

(Horne, 2012, p.164)

Practical and theoretical support coupled with research from scholars and researchers (Atwell, 1998; Augsburger, 1998; Calkins, 1993; Frager, 1994; Graves, 1983; Routman, 1996) in the field have concluded that in order to teach writing well, teachers should experience writing frequently (Murray, 2004). Murray emphatically stated,

If you experience the despair, the joy, the failure, the success, the work, the fun, the drudgery, the surprise of writing you will be able to understand the composing experiences of your students and therefore help them understand how they are learning to write. (p. 74)

My interest in this study began with a sincere, practical and theoretical dilemma as to why teachers of writing did not engage in the practice of writing themselves. More importantly, and certainly with broader implications, “How could teachers, specifically secondary English teachers, effectively teach writing if they did not identify themselves as writers and engage in the process of writing?” The teacher-as-writer debate, discussed in chapter one, opened up considerations as to how teachers identify themselves as writers and the implications for the teaching of writing. My previous experiences and involvement in professional development for writing as a teacher rarely addressed my own writing habits and perceptions of myself as a writer and their implications for how I

taught writing. Consequently, I began this research with the goal of understanding how teachers see themselves as writers and what structures or mechanisms would provide teachers authentic exploration of their identities as writers. Given the challenges that writing proposes for students, it is important to learn how teachers understand writing, how they identify themselves as writers, and the implications for instructional practices. Therefore, I explored how secondary English teachers positioned themselves as writers through participation in a Writing Collaborative designed to provide authentic opportunities for engaging and examining themselves as writers. The following question and sub-questions guided my inquiry:

How do secondary English teachers' identities shape and how are they shaped by the community of the Writing Collaborative?

- a. What practices provide coherence to the Writing Collaborative?
- b. What meanings do teachers make about writers, writing and themselves as writers within the Writing Collaborative?

Using a case study design (Yin, 1994), I examined the ways in which seven secondary English teachers' identities shaped and were shaped by the community within the Writing Collaborative. The transcripts of teacher interviews and Writing Collaborative sessions and field notes served as the primary data sources for the qualitative results. Teachers' writing samples from their writer's notebooks provided additional data to support the study's findings. Three key findings from this study

emerged that are important for understanding how teachers form identities as writers within a supportive learning environment such as the Writing Collaborative. First, findings revealed that teachers engaged primarily in the practice of sharing that contributed significantly to the development of the collaborative, revolving around the following dimensions: (a) interject humor, (b) praise and encourage, (c) support and affirm, (d) ask questions, (e) explore ideas, (e) share knowledge and beliefs, and (f) narrate personal stories, contributing to the foundation of the Writing Collaborative. Second, findings also uncovered categories of meanings teachers made through discursive practices significant to their learning about writers and writing: (a) definitions of writers (b) purposes of writing (c) writing ideas (d) writing as a process, and (e) personal aspects of writing. Third, findings from the study revealed that teachers' enacted, shaped or reshaped multiple writer identities in and through the practices and meanings made in the community. Taken together, these findings indicate that a communities of practice framework supports the formation of secondary English teachers' identities as writers and demonstrates promise for fashioning their identities as teachers of writing.

In this final chapter I draw from Wenger's (1998) concept of modes of belonging, particularly the act of engagement and imagination, as sources of identity to substantiate the Writing Collaborative as a space for shaping teachers' identities as writers. While Wenger's concept has been applied primarily to institutions and organizations outside the realm of education, I feel his concept is particularly useful in interpreting the practices and dialogical intersection of the Collaborative's practices and teachers' enacted, revised,

or consistent identity performances. What can modes of belonging illuminate about the social practices and learning of the Writing Collaborative that supported the shaping of writing identities? More importantly, what significance might the findings have for creating and sustaining such learning environments in the classroom that support students' explorations of their identities as writers? Therefore, I also discuss how the findings from this study have implications for instructional practices and professional development for teachers of writing. To conclude, I consider future research on teachers as writers and teachers of writing.

Identities in Practice

To understand the identities teachers enacted within the Writing Collaborative, Wenger's (1998) concept of modes of belonging is useful because it illuminates the ways in which learning was enhanced and identities were formed. Wenger proposed that belonging to a community involves a combination of *engagement*, *imagination*, and *alignment* work to be performed by its members. *Engagement* entails building relationships, engaging in practices, and negotiating meanings that become sources of identity. *Imagination* affords the individual to take risks, generate scenarios, and create unlikely connections. It allows one to experiment and explore possibilities for reinventing the self (Wenger, 1998), creating opportunities for novel learning (Goodnough, 2010). *Alignment* requires a community to coordinate their practices and discourse towards common goals and to translate ideas across boundaries (Wenger 1998). Working dialogically, these elements demonstrate that in order to learn, we must belong, and that to which we belong can be called a community of practice (Hodkinson &

Hodkinson, 2004). While the three modes of belonging were represented with varying degrees in this study, I discovered that *engagement*, *imagination*, and *alignment* differed among the teachers, but worked in combination to support learning in the community. In other words, how teachers engaged in the practices of the community, imagined themselves as writers and teachers of writing, and aligned themselves with the broader issues of writing beyond the boundaries of the collaborative, served to shape and reshape their identities.

Belonging in the Writing Collaborative

A significant finding highlighted by the Writing Collaborative was the teachers' commitments to the construction of the community and the sense of belonging it provided the participants. Although it was necessary for me to initiate the group, the Writing Collaborative evolved as a community of practice primarily through teachers' contributions to the community, the development of the share practices, and the negotiation of meanings they made about writing.

The most significant contribution teachers made to the construction of the Writing Collaborative was the development of and active engagement in the share practices, which were produced predominately through discursive practices. Understanding the share practices explained how the Collaborative was constructed and recruited teachers' memberships. Though this study's timeline was only one semester, these share practices were negotiated, valued, and consistent across and within the collaborative sessions. As a result, the share practices served to build collegiality and camaraderie among the teachers not only on a professional level, but also on a personal level. These instances of personal

and professional engagement were not just limited to the time spent in the collaborative, however; teachers also interacted informally with one another prior to and after each session. At times, the interactions and relations within the Writing Collaborative were complex (Goodnough, 2010), particularly during inkshedding events when teachers experienced angst with sharing their writing with others. However, the share practices afforded teachers ways to talk through their anxieties and explore this aspect of their writing identity within a supportive, nurturing environment. While the extent to which teachers' engaged in the share practices varied, collectively their engagement constructed an environment that encouraged exploration of their writer identities.

The share practices also proved instrumental as a way for teachers to negotiate and discover meanings about writers, writing and themselves as writers. These collective meanings were the result of opportunities to explore new meanings within the collaborative and teachers' contributions of prior knowledge and experiences. A unique feature of the Writing Collaborative was the diversity of the community. Holland et al (1998) introduced the concept of history-in-person, which they view as "sediment from past experiences" (p.18), those which people bring to the present and use along with cultural resources to respond to various subject positions afforded them. Despite being a new community, the range of writing knowledge and experiences the teachers brought with them, their history-in-person, contributed to the shared knowledge of the community. Thus, engagement in the share practices, not only involved the competence of any one individual, but also the competence of others (Wenger, 1998). The meanings teachers made were generally consistent with current theories on writing and aligned to

the experiences of professional writers and practitioners in the field. Additionally, these meanings provided new insights for the teachers and confirmed existing beliefs and experiences they had with writing. Within the time frame of this study, the Writing Collaborative teachers focused their efforts on a common goal, developed relationships within the group, mutually participated in shared discourse, and generated positive associations toward the work of the community (Wenger, 1998).

Possibilities to Imagine Writer Identities

Another significant finding was the possibilities the Writing Collaborative provided for seeing oneself as a writer. Inextricably linked to the shared practices foundational to the community were the creation of spaces and opportunities where teachers could see the world differently, to imagine themselves as writers and explore who they were and who they were not. Thus, the discursive practices of the Writing Collaborative provided opportunities for teachers to author themselves as writers. During dialogic exchange, teachers are trying to find their own voice among the other competing voices. Bakhtin (1981) referred to this negotiation as “authoring the self,” whereby the “authoring comes from the I, but the words come from the collective experience” (Holland, 1998, p. 171.) For the teachers in this study, authoring themselves as writers was complex and often involved multiple identities, implying “there was no one way of saying, doing, and being” (Dix, 2011, p.409) a teacher who writes.

These multiple writer identities, shaped by the practices and meanings of the community, manifested themselves in different ways. First, most teachers authored writer selves for whom they originally had no claim. Such was the case of Don, who denied

being a writer, yet authored himself as a creative writing teacher or Larissa, who lacked confidence in her ability, but took a risk and imagined herself as a creative writer. Second, the multiple writer identities teachers authored appeared intertwined and related. In Brian's case, for example, his writer identities shared commonalities such as his creativity, use of unique vocabulary, and desire to document that appeared threaded throughout his identities as a writer. Third, some teachers authored themselves in contrasting ways, as in the case of Margaret, whose writer identities appeared to push against one another, causing her to redefine her instructional practices. Her identity as a committed private writer contrasted her traditional teacher of writing, nudging against one another. Danielewicz (2001) reminds us that "interactions at the edges, the borders of things" are "where identities come into being" (p. 113). Thus, there was evidence of "contrasting identity positions creating a productive tension or cognitive dissonance" (Alsup, 2006, p. 36). Margaret's reshaping of her teacher as writing identity was a surprise finding that I take up in the next section.

For teachers, imagination entailed a combination of exploring and enacting who they were as writers as well as envisioning other writer identities for themselves. The Writing Collaborative provided a space for them to expand on what it meant to be a writer, whether or not they were always aware of these enactments and imaginations.

In some cases, understanding themselves as writers provided possibilities to author themselves as teachers of writing and imagine changes to their instructional approach to writing.

Beyond the Border: Possibilities as a Teacher of Writing

A surprising finding from this study involved the shaping of teachers' identities as teachers of writing, indicating how identity work transcended the boundaries of the collaborative. Although the intent of this study focused on teachers as writers, the findings illustrated the ways in which several teachers' identities as writers extended beyond the Writing Collaborative and crossed over into their classrooms as indicated by the teacher of writing identities they fashioned for themselves. Horne (2007) described this phenomenon as "border crossings" when one identity "has permeated and crossed over into other aspects of my identity" (p. 229). In a similar vein, Alsup (2006) described "borderland discourses," where "there is evidence of contact between disparate personal and professional subjectivities, which can lead to the eventual integration of these multiple subject positions" (p. 6). For several teachers in the Collaborative these crossings were subtle alignments and extensions of the writer identities they had authored and made public previously. These crossings were particularly noticeable when teachers shared writing lessons and resources from their classrooms or reported back to the group on writing tasks they had implemented from the collaborative. Crossing borders into teachers' classrooms were also evident in post interviews when teachers talked about changes to their instructional practices as a result of their participation in the Collaborative.

However, for a few teachers, aligning their teacher of writing identities with the practices of the Collaborative required reconciliation. As a form of identity formation, reconciliation "entails finding ways to make our various forms of membership co-exist"

(Wenger, 1998, p.160). Margaret, for example, felt the need to align her teaching practice to the institutional writing demands that emphasized state testing and accountability (Applebee & Langer, 2001). However, she found ways to reconcile her traditional teacher of writing identity by aligning her instructional practices with the knowledge she gained from the collaborative, transforming the way she taught writing. She shared student work samples with me on several occasions that originated from activities completed in the Writing Collaborative. The most telling outcome of this study, however, was when Margaret contacted me prior to the new school year asking for the lessons, resources, and writing tasks from the Writing Collaborative stating, “I want to use them in my classroom this year. Those ideas were so good, and they got my kids excited about writing!”

While an obvious limitation to this study was its length, I suspect given a longer period of time in the Writing Collaborative teachers’ sense of themselves as writers would grow, and they would align their identities as writers to their identities as teachers of writing. The Writing Collaborative would not only be a space of possibilities for writer identities, but also spaces for imagined and possible identities as teachers of writing.

Implications for Professional Development

In order to support their learning and professional growth, teachers need to be provided opportunities for social engagement, collaboration with colleagues, and experiences that support their negotiations of identity (Palincsar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford, & Brown (1998). To date, very few professional development models specific to

English teachers and writing in collaborative environments exist, the work of the National Writing Project notwithstanding. The problem with traditional professional development offerings for English teachers, and arguably for all teachers, is that it has historically ignored their perceived needs, the contexts in which they teach, and the legitimate knowledge they acquire through experiences of teaching in their own classrooms (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). As discussed earlier in this dissertation, professional development for teachers has largely been mandated, short-term, unsustainable, and disconnected to the realities of the classroom.

Secondary English teachers, many of whom do not identify themselves as writers, and particularly those who do not engage in writing on a frequent basis, are rarely provided professional development opportunities that focus on them as learners. Teachers need opportunity to think of themselves as being something different; they need to be able to imagine possibilities for themselves if they want to imagine possibilities for their students. On a theoretical basis, professional development for writing teachers should be designed with the understanding that learning is a social process. As such, teachers should be provided opportunities to engage in authentic learning with their peers in collaborative environments. On a practical basis, I argue that professional development for writing teachers should be voluntary, continuous, and teacher directed and held in authentic settings. The findings from this study suggest strongly that English teachers need a space “to write about, talk about, and otherwise think about” (Hochstetler, 2001, p. 259) writing and their identities as writers and teachers of writing. The following recommendations follow from this study:

- Professional development should focus on teachers as learners (Wenger, 1998) and provide opportunities for them to explore themselves as writers through authentic, collaborative writing experiences and multiple opportunities to talk about themselves as writers and processes they use when they write (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). These opportunities should be continuous, covering an extended period of time.
- Although the teachers in this study defined writers in a variety of ways, efforts should be directed at expanding teachers' understandings of what constitutes a writer, recognizing the varieties of writing and writers beyond traditional school sponsored writing.
- Many schools now establish learning communities for various professional development purposes. These Communities of Practice (CoP) should be comprised of diverse members (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, in constructing a CoP focused on writing, it should consist of teachers from various grade levels and subjects to allow diverse experiences, knowledge and expertise in the community.
- Professional development should assist teachers in exploring and understanding their identities as writers and teachers of writing and the implications for their pedagogical practices in writing (Mckinney & Giorgis, 2009). Providing opportunities for teachers to engage in reflexive thinking about their practice works to support teachers' writing identities.

- Professional development for writing teachers should provide opportunities to work alongside professional writers in a collaborative environment. A more viable learning experience consists of designing a CoP with the “workbench” community (those who are writers) paired with the “schoolhouse” community (teachers responsible for teaching writing) (Palinscar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford & Brown, 1998). Legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) of this kind would afford teachers opportunities to learn in authentic, social settings.
- Professional Development on writing should incorporate the use of book study on seminal works from practitioners and professional writers as a foundational resource “to foster an inquiring, exploratory approach toward teaching” (Brannon & Pradl, 1984).

Implications for Instructional Practice

Recent instructional approaches in literacy, particularly writing, promote dialogical interactions such as writer’s workshop as beneficial to students’ learning (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983), but research shows that a vast majority of writing instruction still maintains a focus on product (Applebee & Langer, 2009) and not writing as a recursive process. Much of this can be attributed to “competing priorities such as test preparation” (Applebee & Langer, 2011, p. 21) that prohibits the amount of time teachers give to authentic writing instruction. Even within this small study, testing and accountability loomed in the mind of one teacher, driving much of her instructional practice. In light of this information, it is imperative that schools and teachers provide

“rich and engaging programs” (p. 26) for students to explore themselves as writers.

Teachers should challenge the status quo of what traditionally happens in classrooms by moving closer toward a sociocultural theory of learning. In many cases, that will require conceptual changes to teachers’ views about writing and the writing instruction in their classrooms (McCarthy, 1990).

This study explored the ways in which teachers participated in a Writing Collaborative, developed practices for engaging in the community, made meanings about writers and writing, and constructed writer identities. Understanding how identities are formed within a Communities of Practice framework is crucial for the work teachers do in their classrooms. Each school year teachers encounter new groups of students who bring with them various experiences, knowledge and identities. As a result, it is necessary for teachers and students to cooperatively “build” a classroom community of practices that support shared notions of what you do in an English Language Arts classroom, providing a space for students to enact writer identities. If in one semester the findings from this study of a Writing Collaborative supported the possibilities of writer identities for teachers, what might that mean for students and classrooms? How can teachers build such a community where the practices and meaning making open up possibilities for students to take up writer identities? The findings from this study have several implications for classroom teachers and their writing instructional practices.

- Classroom teachers’ writing instruction should include opportunities for students to write about and talk about their own identities as writers.

Classroom practices that promote an understanding of the self as writer are likely to teach writing more effectively (Brooke, 1991).

- Classroom teachers should incorporate social learning opportunities in their classrooms such as Writer's Workshop (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983), emphasizing writing as a recursive process.
- This study has demonstrated that the context and writing tasks of the Writing Collaborative supported the shaping of writing identities; therefore, classroom teachers should provide opportunities for students to explore authentic purposes and audiences for writing in many genres and on various topics (Gallagher, 2011).
- Classroom teachers should examine the practices of successful communities of practice such as those described in this study to serve as possible models or frameworks for setting up a writing collaborative in their classrooms. The share practices described in this study could serve as approaches for engaging students in the writing community.
- Classroom teachers should incorporate a writer's notebook into their writing instructional practices. A writer's notebook is a place for students to practice writing daily (Buckner, 2005; Gallagher, 2006) and discover themselves as writers.

Further Research

Although recent studies have focused on teacher identity using a Communities of Practice framework (Au, 2002; Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Deneroff, 2006; Dix, 2012;

Fazio, 2009; Hodges & Cady, 2012; Wilson, 2006), most of these studies have focused on preservice, math, or science teachers. At the time of this dissertation, the only existing studies involving English teachers, writing, and identity work through the lens of communities of practice theory were those conducted by or in conjunction with The National Writing Project. An obvious recommendation is to research issues related to secondary English teachers' identities as writers within a communities of practice framework and the implications for classroom instruction.

- This study did not follow Writing Collaborative teachers into the classroom. Moreover, there are few studies that have explored the dual interplay between teachers' writer identities and their identities as writing teachers (Cremin & Baker, 2010) and subsequent implications for writing pedagogy. Therefore, suggestions for further research include classroom observations to explore the identities teachers perform in their classrooms and the relationship between these identities and the identities they perform in a setting, such as, a writing collaborative.
- Identities need time to take shape (Wenger, 1998) and this study was limited to one semester. Long-term engagement in the collaborative would provide opportunities to deepen practices and meanings. Therefore, this study should be replicated with the intention of extending its time-frame.
- This study was limited to secondary English teachers. To examine how other subject area teachers identify themselves as writers and the implications for

subject area writing instruction, future research should include participants of various content areas and grade levels.

Final Thoughts

This dissertation began by examining the debate over whether teachers should be writers, one that has persisted for over four decades. Realizing the debate was not as simple as “to write” or “not to write,” researchers and practitioners explored this issue further by asking, “Why should teachers write?” Donald Murray (2004), respected author and teacher of writing, answered the question in this way:

Teachers should write, first of all, because it is fun. It is a satisfying human activity that extends both the brain and the soul. It stimulates the intellect, deepens the experience of living, and is good therapy. (p. 73)

Murray gets at the heart of the debate, implying that it is more than just being a writer in a professional sense; it is about becoming writers in our own lives. Being a writer means writing pieces that give satisfaction, fulfill a purpose, or simply bring joy to one’s life. It is understanding that being a writer is not only an identity that belongs to the Ernest Hemingways, Mark Twains, John Steinbecks or Harper Lees of the world. This requires educators to reconsider how they define writers and expand what counts as writing. Being a writer is more than just the act of writing or having the ability to write; it is about one’s confidence level and perception of oneself as a writer. In other words, it is not about *doing* writing; it is about *being* a writer. If we are to fulfill our duties as educators, specifically as English educators who teach writing, we must not only see ourselves as

writers, but also we must strive to build writing classrooms that help students see their possibilities as writers.

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APPENDIX A

WRITING COLLABORATIVE SESSIONS

Session 1: Our Writer's Notebook

The first session of the Writing Collaborative served as an orientation to the study. The goal was for teachers to get to know one another as colleagues, writers, and humans, and to feel comfortable interacting with one another. Although the teachers were from the same school district and same school in two cases, it was important to create a different atmosphere for this interaction. I did not want it to have a “workshop” feel to it. I wanted to set the precedence that the Writing Collaborative was about their learning and their experiences as a writer. Therefore, each teacher introduced themselves to the group, providing something personal and professional, and their reasons for participation in the collaborative. I also spent time acquainting teachers to the book study and reviewing possible writing tasks to be explored throughout the sessions. I introduced teachers to their writer's notebooks by reading an excerpt from the book study and had them write about what they envisioned their writer's notebook to be. Teachers also created a visual of a writer, using symbols and simple illustrations to depict their concept of a writer, which were shared voluntarily with the community. To conclude the first writing session, teachers shared a piece of writing they brought, addressing the following questions: (a) Which genre of writing is it? (b) Why did you choose it? and (c) In what ways does it speak to you?

Session 2: Memoir: Writing Ourselves

The second session focused on autobiographical writing, specifically memoirs. After the sharing of good news, the session began with the reading of Cynthia Rylant's poem, "When I was Young in the Mountains." A brief discussion of the setting, characters and themes followed. To elicit ideas for writing, teachers responded to a quickwrite in which they recalled earliest memories from their childhood. After making a list of memories, teachers chose one memory to write about for five minutes. Later, teachers used this quickwrite to create their own poem, using Rylant's as a model. For the book study segment, teachers skimmed the readings again, highlighted one or two lines that stood out to them, and shared the line they chose and why. To align with Fletcher's notion of "fierce wanderings", teachers created a burning questions section in their writer's notebook. I read a portion of text from the book *The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown* by Betsy Byars to illustrate the ways in which we all have burning questions and curiosities and how we can explore these through our writer's notebooks. In their writer's notebook, teachers made a list of burning questions they had on any topic or idea; these accumulated and served as potential writing topics throughout the collaborative. For this portion of the activity, I introduced teachers to the collaborative concept of inkshedding. Teachers chose one colleague with which to share their burning questions and received feedback either directly on their writing or with sticky notes. After the ink shedding, I facilitated a discussion in which teachers reflected on the inkshedding process. Finally, teachers shared with the group a memento they brought to the collaborative. In sharing their memento, teachers answered the following questions: (a)

What did you bring? and (b) How does it represent you? The mementos served as a catalyst for the creation of a "Where I'm From" poem in session three.

Session 3: Picture This in Words

This session was a continuation of a focus on memoir writing, entitled "Writing Ourselves." The session began informally with teachers engaging in "good news." Teachers then participated in a quickwrite in which they explored the relationship between reader and writer identities and then shared their thoughts with the group. We continued our focus on autobiographical writing by examining a mentor poem, "Where I'm From," which served as a springboard for writing our own poem in a similar style. Teachers spent a few minutes extracting interesting quotes from chapter 3 and chapter 4 of the book study for use in the collaborative discussion. A quickwrite activity entitled "Picture This in Words," followed the book study discussion. Using a writing strategy called "Writing off Photographs" from Debbie Holland's *Deeper Writing: Quick Writes and Mentor Texts to Illuminate New Possibilities*, the teachers analyzed and discussed a photo using guided questions in preparation for "writing off" their own photographs they brought to the collaborative. Using the previous guiding questions, teachers shared their photo and stories with a partner. These discussions helped them generate an original memoir based on the photograph. Teachers spent the last ten minutes of the session drafting their memoirs. The session ended with a review of the next session's assignments, readings, and writing tasks.

Session 4: Writing Our World

This session entitled, “Writing Our World,” focused on expository writing and using the world around us to generate text. This session prompted teachers to use everyday encounters, events, interactions, and talk to generate a piece of writing in a variety of genres. Drawing from recent events in their lives, teachers created a unique headline to reflect the event. These headlines were then redistributed among the group. Using the headline they were given, teachers composed a storyline, using a genre of their choice that coincided with the headline. After teachers read their storyline to the group, the teacher of the original headline revealed the actual story. As was typical of the Writing Collaborative sessions, teachers selected important quotes or passages from the book study chapters, wrote about them in their notebooks and voluntarily shared with the group. In the “I Heard Them Say” segment, teachers reviewed a list of talk they had collected the past two weeks and wrote dialogue, incorporating these authentic snatches of talk they overheard among people. Finally, teachers read a piece of informational text about new ways of writing, annotated the text, and engaged in a collaborative discussion. This was followed by a written reflection in their writer’s notebook. The session ended with a review of the next session’s assignments, readings, and writing tasks.

Session 5: The Power of Our Words

This session continued a focus on expository writing, specifically using lists to generate text. Participants brought a “to do” list they had made recently and used it for generating text during this session. The purpose of the writing activity was to engage participants in thinking about the ways in which writing can be generated from small

snippets of text. During this session we also explored the concept “The Power of Our Words.” Participants were shown two video clips from a PBS documentary titled, “What I Want My Words to Do to You” that supported and explored the concept of the power of words. I facilitated several warm-up and brainstorming activities to get them thinking about the concept. Finally, participants used these ideas to compose an essay in which they explored what they wanted their words to say to others. Participants had time to begin drafting thoughts and ideas for the essay, but were instructed to complete a rough draft to share at the next session. The session ended with a review of the next session’s assignments, readings, and writing tasks.

Session 6: Scraping Our Hearts: Pathways to Poetry

This session began with an inkshedding on “The Power of Our Words” from the last session. After participants shared portions of their essays, we discussed the experience of inkshedding this piece. The second half of the session focused on “Writing That Scrapes Our Hearts.” We began with a quickwrite whereby participants explored the question, “What scrapes your heart? What writing do you do or need to do; otherwise, your heart will burst?” Several volunteers shared their responses. Using the quickwrite as a warm-up, I engaged the participants in an activity created by Georgia Heard called “Mapping Our Hearts.” Participants were instructed to draw a heart shape of their choice. They could draw in their writer’s notebook or on plain white paper, using markers and colored pencils. Inside their heart, they “mapped” things that were important to them. After the heart map, I introduced a variety of poets and sample poems. Participants selected several poems to use as models for their own poem. Using

the mentor poems, they chose one topic from their heart map and create their own poem, mimicking the style, tone, and or structure of the model. These were voluntarily shared among the group. The session ended with a brief discussion of topics from their heart map that provided fodder for writing.

Session 7: Writing About Writing

At the beginning of the session participants shared the heart map poems they began last session. During the book study, teachers highlighted specific passages that stood out to them in the chapter reading, documented them in their notebooks, and discussed them with the whole group. For homework, the participants had read and annotated Anne Lamott's essay, "Shitty First Drafts." These annotations were used to generate discussion about the writing process, in particular, the writing of drafts. In the last segment called "Writing About Writing," teachers wrote reflections about the essay in their writer's notebooks and then engaged in a discussion about the nature of writing. Next, teachers chose one or two quotes about writing from various authors that most aligned with their ideas about writing. In an extended write, teachers reflected on the quote and how it related to them and their writing. After 15 minutes of writing, the group participated in an inkshed with this piece of writing. A debrief about the inkshed process followed. To end the segment, teachers created their own writing quote that reflected them as a writer. These quotes serve as headings for each teacher in chapter six, "Shaping Teachers Identities as Writers."

Session 8: Wave to the Caboose: A Writing Collaborative Celebration

In this last session of the Writing Collaborative teachers celebrated their writing with food, fun, and fellowship at my house. The teachers brought a final copy of a piece of writing of their choice to share after the meal. The sharing time was very informal, with teachers reading their piece aloud to the group. We gathered in my great room, and I placed a chair in the center of the room so teachers would be a focal point as they read their writing. The rest of us sat on the sofas or chairs around the perimeter of the room. We participated in an informal inkshed whereby our feedback was oral at the end of each sharing. Some teachers elected to bring spouses or a friend to share in the writing celebration.

APPENDIX B

TEACHER DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for volunteering and consenting to participate in the Teacher as Writer research study. Your time and participation are appreciated. The demographic information collected will be used to identify teachers throughout the pilot study; therefore, your responses will not remain anonymous. However, confidentiality is assured and all raw and reported data will only be available to the researcher. This is not a research study conducted by your employer, Rockingham County Schools; therefore, administrators and district leaders will not be privy or have access to any information or data collected during the study.

Participant's Name: _____ Current School: _____

I. Demographics:

A) Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

B) Race/Origin: ☐ African American ☐ Caucasian

☐ Hispanic ☐ Mexican

☐ Other (*Please specify*)

C) Age: ☐ 20–25 ☐ 26–30 ☐ 31–35 ☐ 36–40

☐ 41–45 ☐ 46–50 ☐ 51–55 ☐ 56–60

☐ 61 or older

II. Education/Training: *(Please print starting with your most recent degree first)*
A) Colleges/Universities:

| <i>School's Name/State</i> | <i>Degree Earned Year</i> | <i>Year Attained</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

B) Licensure and Certification(s)

| <i>Licensure Areas</i> | <i>State of Licensure</i> | <i>Year Attained</i> |
|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

Certifications (list additional areas of certifications)

III. Teaching Experience:

A) How many years of experience do you have in education? _____

B) What grade levels/ subjects have you taught? _____

C) How many years have you taught at your current school? _____

D) What grade level(s) and/or subject area(s) do you currently teach?

E) How many years have you taught your current grade level _____
and/or subject?

F) Do you or have you taught writing as part of your teaching _____
assignment?

IV. Trainings & Professional Development:

Please list any trainings or professional development activities related to writing or writing instruction for which you were a facilitator or a participant. Briefly describe the content and nature of these trainings/professional development and your role in them.

| Title of PD | Description | Your Role | Year |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

VI. Other Interests:

A) Have you ever participated in a writing group? If so, explain.

B) Please share any other interests you have that you would like for me to know?

Thank you for your participation and cooperation.

APPENDIX C

TEACHER PRE-INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Qualitative Case Study Design

Teachers: N=7; Secondary English Teachers

Interview technique: Semi-structured interviews

Time/Location of Interview: afternoons or evenings at participant's convenience

Length of Interview: 45-60 minutes

Format: Face-to-face; audiotaped

Date: February 2013

Interviewees: Secondary English teachers grades 6-12 in a rural, northern central school district in North Carolina

1. Secure IRB process prior to interviews
2. Secure interview site (school, public library, conference room)
3. Meet with interviewees:
 - thank them for their willingness to participate
 - explain the nature /goals of my research
 - secure consent forms with teachers
 - seek permission to videotape interviews and why

Script:

As I have shared with you before, I am a doctoral student at UNCG in the School of Education. As part of my doctoral program, I am researching teachers' understandings of writing, how they feel about writing, the types of writing endeavors they participate in, and their identities as writers. Your responses will help provide valuable insights into the ways in which secondary English teachers identify themselves as a writer and the implications for issues of writing and writing instruction.

Teacher as Writer:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
 (*This question serves as an ice-breaker and to make the participant comfortable.*)
Researcher: I am really interested in issues of writing and particularly teachers' perspectives on writing as well as themselves as writers. So, tell me....
2. When was the last time you wrote something?
Probe:

- *What type of writing did you do?*
 - *What process did you use to complete the piece of writing?*
3. What does it mean to be a writer?
(*Probe: List all the characteristics you feel a good writer possesses.*)
 4. How do you feel about writing?
 5. Do you consider yourself a writer?
(*Probe: Describe yourself as a writer.*)
 - *What are your experiences with writing?*
 - *What types of writing do you do? Personally? Professionally?*
 - *Describe the types of writing you enjoy.*
 - *Describe the types of writing you dislike?*
 - *Do others see you as a writer?*
 - *Do you share with others what you have written?*
 6. Tell me about your writing approach / process?
 - *What are the challenges you experience with writing?*
 - *What are the successes you experience with writing?*
 7. Do you believe teachers need to be writers in order to teach writing?
 - *Why? Why not?*

Closing: *Are there any other comments you would like to add to our discussion today?*
Thank you for your participation

APPENDIX D

TEACHER POST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Qualitative Case Study Design

Teachers: N=7; Secondary English Teachers

Interview technique: Semi-structured interviews

Time/Location of Interview: at participant's convenience

Length of Interview: 45 minutes

Format: Face-to-face; audiotaped

Date: June 2013

Interviewees: Secondary English teachers grades 6-12 in a rural, northern Piedmont school district in North Carolina who have participated in the Teacher as Writer study.

Script:

As part of the follow up to my research on the teachers as writers, including the ways in which they negotiate an identity within a Writing Collaborative, I will ask specific questions related to your experiences in the Writing Collaborative. Your responses will help provide valuable insights into the ways in which secondary English teachers identify themselves as a writer and the implications for issues of writing and writing instruction as well as future professional development for secondary English teachers

1. Tell me about your experiences in the Writing Collaborative.
2. Describe for me any changes in your sense of yourself as a writer during the course of the study.
 - *In your opinion, what contributed to these changes in your identity as a writer?*
3. Reflect on your participation in this study and its relation to your instructional practices.
 - *During the course of the study, were you aware of any changes in your instructional practices related to writing?*
 - *Could you please describe these changes, if any.*
4. Do you believe teachers need to be writers in order to teach writing?
 - *Why? Why not?*

Closing: *Are there any other comments you would like to add to our discussion today?
Thank you for your participation.*

APPENDIX E

WRITING COLLABORATIVE OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Site: Writing Collaborative Session # _____ **Date:** _____ **Length:** _____ **Observer:** _____

Participant Demographics: Total Participants: 7 Male: 3 Female: 4 **Today' session:** _____ **Absent:** _____

Ethnicity of Participants: White: 7 **Teaching Assignments:** 3 middle school ELA teachers; 4 high school English teachers

| Description of Setting, Actors | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Segment Description: | | |
| What are participants doing? | What are participants saying? | Codes |
| | | |
| Observer's Notes | | |
| | | |

APPENDIX F

DATA ANALYSIS OF THE SHARE PRACTICES

| Share Category WC Sessions | Practice Types | Data Sample |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Interject Humor 1,3,5,6,7,8 | <i>Self-deprecating</i> | <p>Allison: So, Don, do you want to share yours?</p> <p>Don: Yeah, It's just the written word, spread to the world. It doesn't matter whether it's the Koran, the Bible, the Magna Carta, the Constitution...whoever writes has the ability to affect everybody.</p> <p>Margaret: uh, huh.</p> <p>Don: Now, that's pretty deep right there. (chuckles)</p> <p>Margaret: That's VERY deep, Don!</p> <p>Allison: Can we repeat that for the camera? (lol)</p> |
| | <i>In jest; good-natured ridicule</i> | <p>Brian: I bought one of those plastic cylinder things you can put your compost in and keep rolling in....</p> <p>Margaret: That's what ours is...ours you flip upside down.</p> <p>Brian: You can use it to aerate. The screw -in rivets, for some reason, that hold that brown thing to the cylinder, have all popped loose. I spun it and everything went plhhhhhp. (chuckles and laughs from everyone)</p> <p>Brian: I am going to write the company, and say I bought this last year and it's already given out.</p> <p>Margaret: (laughing) Are you trying to tell me your shit will fly? I couldn't resist that...the devil made me say that!</p> <p>Brian: Yeah, well....</p> <p>Margaret: We have chickens in our back yard that run loose. So you can imagine the poop we have. Yeah, I would definitely write a letter to the company.</p> |
| | <i>Put others at ease</i> | <p>Allison: So, how did it feel to have others comment...how did you feel about the others' comments or questions that were...</p> <p>Margaret: They talked about the fact they understood and they really meant they're like what he said they were like maybe clearing the heart instead of the impression you are getting....Some people say things and don't even realize what's coming out of their mouths. We've all done that sometimes. And I have to admit, and I will. I told Allison this...this is the hardest thing I've ever tried to do. And I didn't want to expose myself, so I picked something that was very neutral to write about with words and that was my mother because she is very neutral and all of you can equate to somebody that's crazy and la la la.</p> <p>Wes: I'm sitting right next to ya! Ha ha</p> <p>Margaret: Yeah, so she's my mother and her words do hurt and bite.</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Praise and Encourage 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 | <i>Writing / Styles or Structures</i> | <p>Allison: Mmmm...that was really good. Read that last line again.</p> <p>Larissa: <i>I have nothing but words, words to blanket you.</i></p> <p>Brian: Cool verse.</p> <p>Larissa: So I want my words to be a blanket. Not a wet blanket, but...</p> <p>Leah: I like the superman cape to a base, you know...the woobie....that you carry around and tie around your neck that plays all the parts. I had one, a blanket, it was everything....it was a superman cape, it was a base that I put right here, "you're it!" You know?</p> <p>Larissa: So, I would like my words to be everything, but they're not. And like you I don't always have the right thing to say, so I don't say any words, well, sometimes I may say inappropriate things (lol). But most of the time I don't say anything. Cause they don't come out right.</p> |
| | <i>Successes or Accomplishments</i> | <p>Brian: I'm tickled with my benchmark results we just got. Of course the gifted class is going to look just great cause they just do. But they did really well.</p> <p>Allison: Well, good. That's great news.</p> <p>Brian: I mean, as an AIG class, they did really well. Some of the nonfiction we're doing seems to be paying off. But I have a little 14-student 8th grade group, core 4; you know the whole end of the day thing that happens all the time and stuff. And there are some kids in there who are sub literate. I mean really social promotion every step of the way all the way up to 8th grade. Uhm. Three word sentences. Stuff like that. They are not sentences, but you know what I mean. THEY beat the school average!</p> <p>Allison: Wow!</p> <p>Brian: I was absolutely astonished...they beat the school average and they did as well as the county.</p> <p>Leah: That's cool! You need to share your secret!</p> <p>Brian: So, all this hair pulling has gotten us somewhere.</p> <p>Allison: Something is paying off. Continue to do whatever you are doing. Sounds like they are making gains.</p> <p>Brian: Yeah, I feel really good about those guys. And when I told them about it, they felt good about themselves and maybe that will fertilize the future.</p> <p>Larissa: That's encouraging!</p> |
| Support and Affirm 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 | <i>Making supporting comments; agreeing with others affirming others' comments</i> | <p>Don: You know, I never wrote more than one draft, ever.</p> <p>Allison: I don't write many drafts.</p> <p>Don: I just go back and change the words, but I never rewrite a draft.</p> <p>Leah: Two drafts and that's it. I'm the one who labors over every word, trying to make it perfect the first time. Even if it's not really something that's not going to somebody I'm scared will see it, I just want to write (gestures a perfect paper)</p> <p>Larissa: I sometimes have two papers at one time. I will rough draft on the side then work it into my piece then back and forth like that.</p> |
| Ask Questions 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 | <i>For details / clarification</i> | <p>Larissa: And I went with the paragraph down below that..."Writing opens doors in us we never knew existed." It's like doing that thing I just did...it's like when I get started I have one thing in mind, but then it goes some place else. And where it goes, it's like astonishing sometimes. I can't really believe I had this inside of me. You know? Where did this come from? But..lol...</p> |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| | | <p>Allison: Do you know what might have inspired...? Like you heart map, you had no idea it was going to turn out like that. What might have made the difference?</p> <p>Larissa: I think I have inner feelings that I've inhibited that I don't release until my creative juices start flowing and sometimes I have to go back in these recesses to find out where they're coming from; sometimes I don't want to go there. So, it comes out creatively.</p> <p>Margaret: But that gets back to the fact, that it's your own personal style. It's not wrong, it's not right, that you just did it. That's the main thing.</p> |
| | <i>For Self-affirmation</i> | <p>Larissa: I skipped to page 59, "Writers are fascinated by talk..." And I underlined, "The way we talk says a ton about who we are." Which I think...is ...I mean, that's just wild, right? Because you can look at somebody...I mean you can have an idea of a person and until they open their mouth and the words that come out, it just, it ether enhances it or it really disintegrates, right? Yeah...</p> <p>Wes: Better to say nothing and thought a fool than to open your mouth....</p> <p>Larissa: yeah, exactly...and I'm learning this...</p> |
| | <i>To propose an opposing thought</i> | <p>Allison: One thing I highlighted in the very beginning in the second paragraph is, "All good writers write them." Meaning that these shitty first drafts...and I made a comment, I said, well, knowing that and convincing people of that will give more people confidence that it's okay to produce something. But, and as I said that, that's totally opposite of who I am because I labor over every word. When it finally gets on paper, there's not much revision going to be done to it. I don't freewrite. I just don't sit down and get it all out then worry about moving it around and cleaning it all up and polishing it. It comes out that way. Which is a much more laborious process...at least it's mentally more taxing. I don't know...so, it made me feel better, but then again it didn't. I'm terrified of writing a crappy first draft.</p> <p>Margaret: Well, don't you think it depends on what you're writing for or that you labor over it or you're just writing for the joy of writing? If I'm writing for just the joy then I'm zoom zoom zoom. If I'm writing something to send to someone or it's got to be professional done as you, I will take...be very meticulous.</p> |
| <p>Share Knowledge and Beliefs</p> <p>1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8</p> | <i>Topic specific</i> | <p>Leah: Abraham Lincoln did that. He always wrote...he fired Grant so many times, but he would take it, write the letter and then sleep with it under his pillow. And then if he still felt the same way the next day, he would send it. So, I always kept that too. I have written letters just blah blah blah then just sleep on it and if I still feel the same way, I will mail it.</p> <p>Brian: That's a good idea.</p> <p>Leah: And that's ...Abraham Lincoln did that. So, I just stole it from him. You know, he and I were friends.</p> |
| | <i>Writing and Writers</i> | <p>Mindy: I chose one on 106. I just chose the letter the little boy was gonna write to his mom who had committed suicide. It says, "With these four words he broke the silence." It reminded me of the topic on our discussion board to me, that's good writing and several people posted about good writing is the impact it has on others. But, I think also, good writing is the impact it has on you when you write it because that probably just had such a big impact on him, those four words, just starting that letter. I think that was something; that was good writing. Something he needed to do.</p> <p>Margaret: It was healing writing</p> <p>Mindy: Yes.</p> |

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| <p>Personal Experiences</p> <p>1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8</p> | <p><i>Narrating personal stories</i></p> | <p>Mindy: I did the same quote and I could picture somebody like turning up...you always find that lost treasure or something you've been looking for when you change the couch cushions or reach down in the couch or lift it up and you always find that stuff. And it also reminded me...it reminded me sometimes things get lost in couch cushions or books and it brought back this memory when after my grandma died we were looking and cleaning out her house. My mom grabbed her bible cause it was a bible her sister had given her so my dad wanted to give it back to my aunt. When we were looking at it something fell out and it was the bulletin from the last Sunday she went to church before she fell and hit her head and she was never right after that. But the month and day on the bulletin was also the month and day in which she died. Obviously not the year, but I just thought that was hmmm.</p> <p>Margaret: That's freaky</p> <p>Larissa: Yeah, that's worth writing about.</p> <p>Mindy: I don't know...that was just strange</p> |
| <p>Explore Ideas</p> <p>1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,8</p> | <p><i>Acknowledge or Present a new idea</i></p> | <p>Mindy: I drew a stick figure and incorporated some of the things y'all did. One thing I had that we had not talked about...I put like a "no talking" sign over their mouth because...A lot of my students who like to write, don't like to talk or they have trouble talking, so they choose to write. Some of my quietest students have the best pieces of writing. They don't mind sharing what they think through their writing, but they just don't verbalize it.</p> <p>Allison: Hmmm...I've never thought about that.</p> <p>Brian: Yeah, they have a lot to say, but are really intimidated by people.</p> <p>Larissa: uh, huh. Yeah. (nods head)</p> <p>Mindy: That's their way of communicating.</p> |
| | <p><i>Acknowledge or Present an opposing idea</i></p> | <p>Brian: The passing of the papers...it's nice to be able to...I learned that these guys have some good cursive. I wouldn't have known that if they read it aloud, but I found that here and wherever even with my own students and stuff...I'd rather hear the reading. I'd rather hear the author read their work. Why? Because only they know where to emotionally accent the words they've chosen, how to pace it,. You know? and stuff like that? And I feel a whole nother layer of meaning comes in when we get..like you know, if you've ever listened to Robert Frost musically accompanied. It's poetry. He used to make recordings of that stuff; so did James Joyce. And it's really interesting to hear, you know? It's different on a page. There's something missing. It's like it's pastel as compared to rainbow colors for me. When you guys are actually reading your own stuff I get it even more.</p> |
| | <p><i>Restate or Clarify Ideas</i></p> | <p>Margaret: Yes, and I like that quiet time or whatever you want to call it, and it's easier cause then my mind can work and bring out all those feelings. So, I know exactly what she's saying.</p> <p>Brian: I think there has to be a balance. You have to go out and come back in. Sometimes we have this picture of total isolation and so when I saw...that level of serious isolation that kind of got me. I don't know about total isolation, but you have to have a place. We talked about that in our first meeting...your writing place.</p> <p>Larissa: Yes</p> <p>Margaret: That's true.</p> |
| | <p><i>Name / Categorize Ideas</i></p> | <p>Allison: You know, he calls this chapter "Fierce Wonderings." Those things that burn at you. I don't know if it's being nosey, or being anal...there's a burning question you have and you need to figure it out.</p> <p>Margaret: You know what I'm saying. You go to bed at night and you can't put it to rest.</p> <p>Brian: There's a name for that. It's called perseverative thought. It perseveres even when you want to go back to</p> |

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| | | <p><i>sleep.</i></p> <p>Margaret: <i>Yeah, I just can't put it to rest. It whirls my mind. And I know Allison does this, too. What if I had done this? What if I had done that?</i></p> |
| | <i>Extend Ideas</i> | <p>Leah: I'm constantly writing and re writing. It's not what I want to say....</p> <p>Brian: It's not there yet.</p> <p>Leah: It's not there yet.</p> <p>Brian: When I write songs I'm more that way. When I'm writing a song, it needs to coordinate, the rhythm needs to coordinate with whatever the melody I got and ideas and stuff. I will edit a song like crazy to get it to land properly.</p> <p>Leah: But my day affects...cause even here this (reads a portion of the text) is an angry text. It's different than the piece I finally settled on. Cause it goes on how I feel...I had a bad day with kids...the first draft was really about being pissed off. I want my words to convince others to be kind, reflective, cause I've been harping on these kids about that. So, depending on ... I can write the same thing 6 or 7 times. So, depending on my mood, I can write about the same topic over and over and get a different result.</p> <p>Brian: So you might have several changes.</p> <p>Leah: Very much so.</p> |

APPENDIX G

DATA ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE MEANINGS OF WRITERS AND WRITING

| Categories of Meanings | Descriptions of Meanings | Data Samples |
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| Definitions of Writers | <p>Writers are observers, reporters, researchers, artists, and communicators</p> <p>Writers are accurate, concise, spontaneous, observant, creative, imaginative, empathetic, reflective, and visual</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think we need to be good observers in order to have something to write about. • It's a way of releasing your inner thoughts and feelings, just like painting for artists. • You need to be clear, concise, to the point. • I like to produce. That's my thing...I produce. I don't worry about what people will think. • We need to be able to empathize in order to feel something about what we're writing about. |
| Purposes of Writing | <p>To create understanding; document thinking to elicit new ideas</p> <p>To explore a personal topic of interest</p> <p>To document current or past events</p> <p>To recall information, memories</p> <p>For therapeutic purposes; to heal</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just a whole bunch of these "first" things that aren't going to be a "first" thing ever again. • I think all of us have things we dwell on; I call them "brain worms." Stuff you can't get out of your head. • So, that kind of sparks interest for me to maybe start to write some of those kinds of things down...so I can pass them down to my children and grandchildren • Yeah, but it made you feel good as you wrote it. That was my big thing. It brought back good memories, it brought back good thoughts as I wrote this. • It was healing writing |
| Writing Ideas | <p>Generated by current and past events, memories, and personal stories</p> <p>Motivated by talk</p> <p>Influenced by reading: vocabulary, ideas & opinions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And all there was were these great stories and here we are in this writing class, right? You know, and how many of us are remembering stoorieees and stuff because you can't go see it any more? • As our lesson that Allison sent us about talk...think about all the things we could write about just because we've talked and what it is provoking in our memories that we want to write down. • Being a reader is definitely reflective in what I write, because that's where I get my vocabulary |

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| Writing as a Process | <p>Writing process (style, technique, organization) varies among writers</p> <p>Number of drafts varies among writers</p> <p>Writer's block is authentic</p> <p>Writers emulate others; use models</p> <p>Sharing writing and providing feedback, although uncomfortable, supports writers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like the repetition of the word field that you used. I think that describes you...or at least what I know of you. Different fields...as a coach, a teacher, and as a parent. • Two drafts and that's it. I'm the one who labors over every word, trying to make it perfect the first time. • As a writer in general, at some point or other you hit a block...that wall where you go. • I think to write well you kind of need an example, and inspiration to draw from because why would you want to write if you have not seen good writing? • But I gain more confidence the more I write and when I get feedback from other people who say, "This is a really good piece." That boosts me, and I can write more. |
| Personal Aspects of Writing | <p>Writing is personally engaging; but requires honesty</p> <p>Writers relinquish control once their writing is made public</p> <p>Writing exposes and represents the self</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have to be honest with yourself, which isn't always easy. • Oh, once something is published, it's out of our hands. • Yeah, but I just...I just...I just don't want to expose myself. I guess I don't want to be a model. • Well, is it because you think when we write it represents ourselves and what's inside of us, too? And also creating this little heart thing, I realized how much of myself I'm letting....exposing. |